

# ARK THE LEGEND

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ROK GAME FANTASY STORY

## 아크더러전드

# Ark : The Legend volume 1

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# Ruins Exploration

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“This is.....”

Ark muttered with a lost expression. Ark had arrived at Nephalim, sold to the Silver Hand and hunted the mechanical Nakuma for a fortnight because of one goal. That was the hack the memory chip of the toy airplane to determine the data. It was the reason he rolled around in the mud and was covered in oil. He finally completed the hacking program ‘Invader’ and was ready to access the data on the toy.

-You have attempted a hack.

The hacking process will change depending on the lock. The lock and degree of difficulty will depend on the rating of the hacking skill.

If you penetrate all the security measures around the lock then it will be released.

“Eh?”

Ark had thought the rest would proceed automatically after making the hacking program. Yet the information window said that some technique was necessary to release the lock. Of course, Ark panicked because he didn’t know any techniques.....

-The current lock accessed is ‘High Runner: Level 2.’

The character is located on the left end of your hacking program ‘Invader.’

You need to break through numerous obstacles and the guardian protecting the data to reach the destination. If you touch any obstacles or the guardian then the hacking will fail.

Now, display your newly learned hacking capabilities and try to invade the data!

The Nymphe's screen ended up changing. A person holding a big key appeared on the lower left and started running. And numerous rocks, traps and robots appeared on the right side. Then Ark's character hit a rock.

-GAME OVER!

The hacking has failed. If you fail 3 times in a row then you can't connect to 24 hours.

"Game over? What? So this....."

Ark was able to 100% understand how to hack after trying it once. Once he understood then it wasn't a problem completing it. While killing time riding the train or us, he would often play games like 'Wind Runner' and 'Dragon Flight' on his smartphone. In the end, his hacking would succeed if he moved his character holding the key through the obstacles to the final destination. Well, it was easy enough to understand.....

"..... This is hacking?"

Ark felt relieved at the thought. It was inevitable that Galaxian followed the rules of the game but to have Wind Runner..... Anyway, this style of hacking wasn't bad for Ark. In this generation of smartphones, Ark was familiar with these types of casual games. Thanks to his exception concentration and reflexes, he had placed 1st in quite a few games. He was already an expert in this field!

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

Jump with perfect timing! Jump! Jump! After the first failure, Ark used amazing concentration to jump over numerous obstacles. Ark's alter ego finally reached the gates and plugged in the key. The gates parted and a message appeared.

-You have broken through all the firewalls protecting the data and released the lock!

The data from the memory chip has been downloaded to the

Nymphe.

“It’s a success!”

Ark cheered with joy. Although he had panicked at the disconcerting sight of the 80’s game, he had succeeded in surpassing all obstacles and obtained the data. It took a fortnight to get here! The result of all his troubles could now be confirmed.

‘What will be on here? A hidden dungeon? Or a skill?’

Was there a time where I’ve ever been so thrilled playing the game? The thought of the hidden heart made his heart pound. He impatiently waited for the data to download. 10%, 20%, 30%.....it finally reached 100%.

“Ohhh! Now!”

Ark clenched his fist and shouted.

-A system error has occurred!

The unverified damage has dealt fatal damage to your Nymphe’s OS.....

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“Huk! W-what is this?”

His cheer turned into a scream. The screen of his Nymphe turned blue once the download was complete. The screen filled with unknown characters and symbols!

“T-this is.....?”

Cold sweat appeared down Ark’s back. Ark had seen such a blue screen before. But it was in reality not Galaxian. That’s right. Anybody would understand what it was. It was the typical screen that appeared when something was wrong with the computer’s OS. It was the blue screen that sent any user into panic!

“This is ridiculous! Why is this window appearing on the Nymphé? A blue screen?”

Ark screamed like crazy as he touched the Nymphé. However, the Nymphé.....

The screen sometimes changed but the characters and symbols were still there. All his functions on the Nymphé like the character information window, item window and system explanations were jammed! Ark’s head also become stuck.

“W-why all of a sudden.....?”

Ark shouted before suddenly closing his mouth. Ark was reminded of something. The blue screen had appeared just after he downloaded the data from the airplane toy. That was the only answer that appeared in his mind.

“No way.....the data downloaded from the toy place.....was a computer virus.....”

There were also computer viruses in a game? Who would’ve imagined such a thing? But there was no other possible reason.

“Oh my god! What do I.....?”

Ark grabbed his head as he collapsed to the ground. He suffered for a fortnight just for his Nymphé to obtain a virus? Ark felt despair as he saw the blue screen of the Nymphé. The Nymphé contained all the systems in Galaxian. Aside from the character screen, what point was there in playing the game when he couldn’t even confirm items or quests?

‘.....That’s right!’

Some light returned to Ark’s hopeless eyes.

‘Yes, if the Nymphé is gone then I can’t even confirm items, skills and my character. It won’t be a game at all. This is a serious bug so Galaxian must have a way to recover from it. They wouldn’t want to make the users quit the game so there must be a way!’

It was natural when he thought about it logically. Ark then ran around

the commercial district looking for information about how to restore the Nymphé. But he couldn't find any information even after running around for a few hours. Hacking was a 4 star rated skill. The game service for Galaxian had just started so not that many users had learnt hacking. And how many people would be unlucky in their attempts of hacking like Ark? But there had to be a way. There was no doubt about it. However, there was no guarantee that he could find it. Ark grabbed his broken Nymphé and whined.

'Dammit, why do I keep having such bad luck?'

Ark let out a heavy sigh.

"Rululu! Rululu!"

A humming sound was heard from near him. The hamster carrying a large bag was entering the junkyard. It was Ark's employer Tori. Then an '!' popped into Ark's head.

'Stupid! Did my head disappear as well as my Nymphé? Why have I been searching in the wrong place? There is an expert right next to me. That's right. The hamster told me that the hacking skill he taught me was child's play. That guy must've seen other people suffering from the same situation.'

The only thing he was worried about was that it was the hamster Tori. Ark knew that he was a guy who would extort money no matter what. Ark was extremely worried about that point but he had no choice. No, he would pay whatever it took if Tori solved his problem.

"That....."

Ark deliberately looked hopeless as he approached Tori. The humming Tori stared at him with wide eyes and asked.

"Eh? What are you doing here? You still haven't made the hacking program?"

"No, I created the hacking program....."

"That is good."

Tori put down his baggage and pulled out a bunch of papers.

“You’ve created the hacking program so you have nothing to do right? Then scatter some of these.”

“What is it?”

“Isn’t that obvious? Flyers, an advertising poster.”

Tori waved the flyer in front of Ark’s face as he replied.

-Limited time sale for Tori’s store ‘Gear!’

「Ignition Bullet」, 「Superconducting Electromagnet」and a large number of useful item will be sold at 20% of the normal price. This is a great chance to purchase useful items for a cheap price!

Look for Tori’s Gear shop in D-23 of the commercial district.

Those contents were written on the flyer. Ark looked at the flyer and asked absentmindedly.

“Eh? Ignition Bullet? Superconducting electromagnet? You sold such items in your store?”

“They’re all here.”

Tori hit his bag and smiled.

“I’ve managed to obtain these for 50% of the fixed price a short time ago.”

“Eh? 50% of the fixed price? Where?”

“Hihihihi. Actually I lent some money to a store suffering from financial difficulties. But I knew. Their store would perish soon.”

“You lent them money knowing their store would perish?”

“Of course. Then it will turn into money for me.”

Tori the hamster smiled evilly.

“This store has quite a bit of technology. The store also has a patent on the Ignition Bullet and Superconducting electromagnets. Well, they expanded their business by force and suffered financial



difficulties.....Anyway, I knew their store was already in an unrecoverable state and lent them money. After I heard that the store had applied for bankruptcy, I quickly collected these items as collateral.”

“So you accepted these items instead of a debt?”

“It’s not just these items.”

Tori proudly took out some papers. It was the patents and blueprints for the Ignition Bullets, the Superconducting electromagnets and others.

“This is the real money.”

This was the reason why Tori lent money to the store that was dying. The dying store had no money to repay Tori and would end up in debt. Therefore Tori received the store’s products instead. And it was obviously a good value for Tori. Tori said 50% but he actually gained it for less than that. No, he said 50% but he had clearly drained them of their blood.

“So you were thinking of money from the beginning.....”

“Of course. Why else would I lend money to a company about to go broke? Bah! Any other company would’ve just deprived them of all their money. But who am I? I already investigated everything. I employed many mercenaries and they eventually gave me the rights to the patents. Hihihih!”

‘I know this but.....’

He really was a scamming hamster. However, he had no intention of attacking. This was the principle of a capitalistic economy. Ark had also earned quite a bit of money through this principle. Then Tori sent him a coy look.

“Hihihih. Right now Nephalim is overflowing with beginner pioneers like you. If I sell it to the pioneers there is no doubt that I can earn money. Hihihih! How about it? Huh? Do you want to buy some now? I’ll give you a staff discount of 23%.”

“That’s okay.”

“Sheesh, what a cheapskate!”

“Cheapskate? You’re the one who arranged for me to collect metal from the Nakuma to learn hacking. Isn’t it impossible for me to have any money? And isn’t Tori-nim my sponsor? Shouldn’t you give me these type of support items for free?”

“One.....it is possible to give.”

Tori surprisingly nodded and agreed. But as expected from the hamster, it actually wasn’t for free. Tori pulled out a few bundles of flyers and said.

“If you scatter all of these then I will give you one Ignition Bullet.”

“How many are there?”

“5,000. Of course, you shouldn’t just scatter them anywhere. You said hand them out properly one by one to each person individually. 1 flyer will earn you 1 mileage point.”

Tori said while waving the flyer. Like it was explained a while ago, originally sponsors would give support to the user. However, the sponsor wouldn’t give it without anything in return. The users could do chores or quests for the sponsor in order to get mileage points. Of course, the mileage would be a lot higher the more difficult the task was. For example, if he distinguished himself in a war area for the galactic federation then he would build up huge mileage and could even receive a unique item. That’s why users preferred the federation of the 4 big businesses as sponsors since they gave quests with huge mileage.

‘Then.....’

Ark stared at the flyers. The contract was just handing out flyers to pioneers.....well, it was impossible to obtain anything other than part time jobs when a junkyard was the sponsor. However, he had a reason to be motivated about the work. He earned 1 mileage point for each flyer so that would be 5000 points. If he thought about it like that then he would be motivated. Tori deliberately aimed for

these items and lent money so they might be unexpectedly useful. However.....

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This was the item information when he tried to search for it on the Nymph. He couldn't even confirm the items directly because of the problem with his Nymph.

'In this state, I won't even be able to recognize a legendary item if it rolled on the ground in front of me!'

Ark's top priority had to be restoring his Nymph.

'I need to figure out a way to restore my Nymph!'

He couldn't think about money right now. Ark thought for a while before suggesting carefully.

"I understand. I will hand out 5,000 flyers. You also don't need to give me the Ignition Bullet."

"What? You'll hand out the flyer for free?"

Tori's eyes widened. Ark nodded and Tori stared making noise.

"Hihihihi. You're finally starting to learn something. That's right. If you're a true pioneer then you should give priority to growth over profit. Both the company and the employee will benefit. Pioneers these days don't realize this. As expected, the one that Cheksun introduced is different. No, isn't it due to my education methods? Anyway, it doesn't matter as long as you have that mindset. Then please work hard. If you maintain that attitude then becoming a formal employee won't be a dream anymore."

"Yes. I'll work hard. But....."

"But.....?"

"I actually have a small problem."

“A problem? What is it?”

“That.....”

Ark studied Tori’s face before getting to the main subject.

“Actually, I wanted to learn hacking from Tori-nim because I accidentally picked up a memory chip. I needed hacking to obtain the data. Just before, I finally released the lock and downloaded the data to the Nymphe.”

“Oh! Really?”

“Then suddenly this happened.”

Ark sighed and showed Tori the screen of his Nymphe. Tori’s black eyes rounded and he looked at the Nymphe for a while. He pulled out a cigarette and smoked it for a while before sighing and saying to Ark.

“You....are screwed.”

‘This damn hamster! I already know that which is why I asked you!’

Ark thought angrily but he showed patience and asked.

“Do you know why it happened?”

“There could be a couple of reasons. Sometimes a computer will be infected with a virus and similar symptoms will occur. But that isn’t the main reason. The important thing is that the Nymphe won’t work unless the data is legitimate.

“Legitimate data?”

“You know the basics of the Nymphe but it isn’t just a simple terminal. Some ignorant pioneers might mistake it as a smartphone but it is entirely different from a primitive device like that. It possesses some of the same functions as a smartphone but the most important function is its ability to assimilate the users’ genetic information. It can connect to all devices in Galaxian and the Nymphe can even display special powers if you obtain a powerful weapon. The Nymphe is the basic, required equipment in the space

pioneering age.”

He had heard such things when first starting Galaxian.

“Therefore the federation directly manages the OS of the Nymphé. The federation monopolized the patient and stopped other companies from manipulating the systems.”

“So.....I’ll have to go to the federation to restore my Nymphé?”

“That’s the problem.”

Tori stared at his cigarette with an uncomfortable expression before continuing.

“You can go to the federation to restore your Nymphé’s OS. If it was a normal error. That is.....If the error was because of data download from a federation’s program then the OS will be restored for free but.....”

Tori put a ‘.....’ and Ark waited impatiently.

“Your case is different. If the investigate the system while restoring the OS then the illegal hacking program will be discovered. And you used the hacking program to release a lock and received the data. That alone is a serious crime in Galaxian. Didn’t I say it before? All rights to the Nymphé’s OS belonged to the federation. If it is revealed that the data you downloaded changed the OS then your crimes will just pile up. If you show it to the federation then you will be 100% arrested immediately.”

Tori clicked his tongue and muttered.

“In other words, you’re screwed.”

Ark’s head was blank after hearing Tori’s explanation. He had barely started the game a month ago and he hadn’t even reached level 30 before being arrested. If he was a criminal then he would receive enormous penalties.

‘But.....’

He wasn’t able to play the game directly. He had to report it to the

federation even if it meant receiving a penalty. When he was halfway to giving up, Tori secretly whispered to him.

“But there is a way.”

“Huh? A way?”

“Yes, your Nymphe is broken because of something to do with the OS. The OS is a program. So you just need to treat the virus and it will work again.

“But only the federation can.....”

“It was originally like that.”

Tori smiled and replied.

“However, if I make up my mind then this Tori can reconfigure the OS.”

“R-really?”

“Yes, when I was younger I would hack recklessly and my Nymphe would also be broken like this. Hihihhi! So I learnt how to catch the virus using Cheksun’s Nymphe. If I use a similar method then your Nymphe can be restored.”

Tori also experienced similar things while hacking. Ark’s guess was correct.

“T-then.....”

“Of course it won’t be easy.”

Tori gave a meaningful smile before getting to the point.

“The Nymphe’s OS is incredibly complicated. An enormous amount of time and effort is needed to restore it properly. And like I said before, accessing the Nymphe’s OS is illegal. If you want to restore your OS then I will have to commit a felony. It is dangerous. A dangerous action.”

Ark’s was tense after Tori’s words. Tori.....it was unnecessary to say but he was a scamming hamster. He had requested metal parts

worth 200 gold in order to learn the hacking skin. Ark was almost cheated a few times after that so he was prepared. And repairing the Nymph's OS was a felony. Wouldn't he obviously request a lot? Ark was restless from those types of thoughts. Tori's eyes sparkled and he whispered.

"I'll do it for free."

"F-for free? Really?"

"I won't ask for anything. I will restore your Nymph for free if everything goes well."

"Everything goes well?"

"Yes, if the work goes well."

Tori grinned and nodded.

"It is hard to explain in detail but there is a reason I placed my store in this corner. I once explored Galaxian with Cheksun. During that time, I obtained some information by chance. Nephalim has a significant amount of artefacts buried somewhere. That is why I settled in Nephalim. To excavate the artefacts. I've been working on it for a long time and it has advanced."

Tori looked around before speaking in a lower voice.

"That's why I'm making you an offer. I've been working alone but now there is a problem."

"A problem.....?"

Ark's voice also became lower as he asked. Tori replied.

"I can dig to the place where the relics are buried on my own. But according to my information, there is a type of security guard where the relics are buried. Even a genius like me can't deal with that. However, I can't hire mercenaries to dig up the relics. But you're different. You are my contracted employee and you also managed to deal with hundreds of Nakuma."

Tori narrowed his eyes and approached.

“The condition is 30% of the relics discovered. And the restoration of your Nymphe’s OS. How about it? The conditions aren’t bad right?”

An information window appeared as soon as Tori finished talking.

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He couldn’t read the information window. However, it was possible to guess the contents.

‘Certainly.....’

Tori’s conditions weren’t bad. No, it was actually a ridiculously good condition. The Nymphe being restored for free and 30% of the relics was a windfall he never thought he would receive. However, the problem was that the NPC suggesting this was the hamster Tori. He was the one who taught the hacking skill for 200 gold and even lent money to failing businesses to obtain their patents! Then wouldn’t his suggestion definitely have some ulterior motive?

‘He is definitely up to some mischief.....’

Ark stared at Tori as he contemplated. Tori seemed to suspect Ark’s thoughts and added.

“Okay. I’ll honestly tell you. In fact, I will also be in trouble if you go to the federation. If the federation starts investigating then they might discover that I taught you hacking. Well, I might be able to appease them somehow but there is no guarantee. In the end, both of us are in the same boat. And I also need a soldier to fight the guardian and find the relics. So I used my big heart and made a proposal.....if you don’t like it then I guess it’s not possible.”

“Wait a minute.”

Ark grabbed Tori’s shoulder who was turning around. Tori’s words couldn’t be 100% trusted. Obviously he was up to some mischief. However, Ark would be trapped in chains if he refused so he had no choice. It was better to believe in Tori. Tori’s suggestion



was also registered as a quest. The quest was an absolute law to NPCs. The hamster had registered his offer as a quest so he couldn't go against it.

"I accept. The offer, I'll accept it."

[-!#\$@! EFD!#\$!#\$!#\$!#\$! D!@\$##.]

The message appeared once he accepted the quest.

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"Pant pant pant, pant pant pant."

Beads of sweat rolled down Ark's face and back. His shoulders, waist and thighs throbbed as he felt pain in his muscles.

"Ouch, there is no place on my body that doesn't hurt. Damn, what on earth...."

Ark sighed as he looked at the long tunnel. The tunnel was hundreds of metres in length and was 100% made with Ark's hard work and sweat as it lead towards the place the artefacts were buried.

Tori said that the place wasn't far. When he accepted the quest, Tori brought Ark to a corner of the junkyard. He extracted a bit from the bottom of a pile of junk and a hidden trapdoor to the basement appeared. There was the beginning of a tunnel in the basement. Tori had been working on it for a long time so the tunnel already went for hundreds of metres.

'He made this tunnel by himself?'

His thoughts about Tori slightly changed after seeing the tunnel. So far Ark thought that Tori was a hamster who engaged in fraudulent schemes. Of course, he still thought of Tori as a scamming hamster. But he managed to dig this tunnel and obtained patents from failings stores so he wasn't a lazy hamster.

'That guy surprisingly has some good points....'

He thought like this but it only lasted for a minute. Tori threw him a shovel as soon as he entered the tunnel.

"Now, take this. This will be your workplace from now on. I'll give

you three meals a day so don't even think about dying before you reach the destination."

"Eh? By myself?"

"What, are you dissatisfied?"

"No, no dissatisfied but....."

"Well, we've traded together so I've arranged this for you. I was also the one who located the relics and dug the tunnel up to here. I'm also giving you 30% of the profit. Besides, I'm also repairing your Nymphé for free. Then shouldn't you do something to prove your worth? Do you want me to dig the rest of the tunnel and give you the relics?"

He didn't have anything to say to that. If he thought about it like that then Tori certainly did most of the work.

"And my work has built up because I've been busy because of the debt. But now I have to fix the Nymphé for you. If you find the relics quickly then your Nymphé will be restored faster. So start digging with the shovel and stop complaining."

He wasn't wrong. Thus Ark ended up digging the remaining tunnel alone.

'Then a machine! This is the future! In the age of space ships, I have to dig a tunnel with a shovel? At least an excavator or something! He wanted to express that thought but.....

"I'll tell you in advance but don't expect any machines. The devices are possible but the distinctive noise and electronic signals means there is more risk of being caught. Didn't I tell you? This has to be done in absolute secrecy."

.....He couldn't say anything else.

"I don't know what I'm doing in this game."

A sigh flowed out as he grabbed the shovel. Galaxian was a next generation virtual reality game that captured the attention of gamers around the world! Galaxian was a grand scale SF game with many

ancient alien civilizations. And Ark dreamed about being a hero in space when he connected to Galaxian. However, in R-14 he ended up cleaning the pipes. He also rolled around in the mud after arriving Nephelim and now he was digging. This was more like a labour game instead of a SF game.

“I’m shovelling in the age of space ships.....”

A sigh naturally emerged. However, Ark shook his head firmly.

“There’s only one thing to do. I don’t have a choice so it is better to think positively. Yes, it is good because I can restore my Nymph without becoming a criminal. I can also get some artefacts.”

Tori was a money obsessed hamster. The relics Tori was targeting definitely had value. If an NPC like Tori was aiming towards the relics then Ark was convinced. And he could obtain 30% of the relics once he found them.

“Yes, this is an opportunity!”

Ark was filled with motivation and grabbed the shovel. He connected to the game, shovelled, ate lunch, shovelled, had dinner and shovelled until he fell asleep! His lower back was broken as he shovelled every day. Shovelling was hard work. It didn’t matter if this was a game. Digging for 1 hour would cause muscle pain to his shoulders, waist and legs. If he dug for a few days then there was no place that wouldn’t hurt. If he was this tired in the game then he would be suffering in reality.

“But there is no jackpot without pain!”

Ark clenched his teeth. Thus he didn’t rest and shovelled around the clock. It was a truly indomitable spirit! He started to get the hang of it after digging so much. It was possible to move his waist more efficiently and he could handle large rocks more easily..... Once he got the hang of it, his muscle pain also started to dwindle. When Ark’s muscles became used to it.....

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An unidentified information window emerged from the Nymphe. He was still unable to recognize the symbols and characters.

“Anyway, I can already guess the information.”

Ark could guess the contents of the information window. As soon as the information window appeared, his digging speed started to increase. The information window was related to digging! He had dug the tunnel for a few days using a shovel so he had learnt a skill. Wiping the pipes for a week on R-14 and gaining the Facilities Maintenance skill, collecting metal parts to learn Hacking and now digging.....Ark started to get bad vibes as he looked at all his skills. Anyway, there was no need to say that the digging skill was immediately useful!

“Yes, this is it! Ohhhh!”

Papapapa! Papapapa! Papapapa!

Ark seemed to turn into a mole as he dug the tunnel with tremendous speed. After another few days, a sound was heard.

Kang-!

The end of the shovel seemed to encounter something. It didn't encounter rocks. The shovel had hit iron! Ark judged that something was there and removed the dirt around it. And a wall made of metal appeared. No, he thought it was a wall but a door actually appeared once the soil was removed. It was a firmly closed rusted, iron door.

“Perhaps this is where the relics are hidden.....”

Ark immediately went back to the junkyard to call Tori. Tori's eyes shone as he saw the iron door and he laughed.

“That's right! This is great! This door leads to where the relics are hidden!”

“But it is locked?”

“Hihihihi, of course it is locked.”

Tori pulled out a connector and linked his Nymphe to the locking mechanism on the door. After a few moments of manipulating, there was a beep and the locking device was turned off.

“That.....?”

“Who do you think taught hacking to you?”

Tori smiled and pushed open the iron door. Ark’s heart pounded as he entered with Tori. The relics were hidden here. Therefore Ark had imagined the ruins of an ancient city underground. However, the iron door connected with a long, cylindrical passage. This was more like a sewage treatment plant than a ruin?

“The relics are hidden here?”

“No, this passage will take us to the location.”

“Then the passage will connect to some ruins?”

“Ruins?”

Tori looked sceptically at Ark. Then his eyes rolled and he burst out laughing.

Wiiing-!

Suddenly he had the sound of a motor. Tori jumped back with a nervous look and muttered.

“Ark! Those guys!”

“Those guys?”

“You fool, what did I hire you for? I told you. There is a guardian protecting the relics. Do you understand? From now on it is up to you.”

Didn’t he dig the tunnel leading here? He wanted to question it but there was no time. The motor sound approached and a red light appeared. An android type monster was surveying the area with a red ray of light. The lower part of the android had four wheels like a wagon. The red ray touched Ark and Tori and the android started making warning sounds.

*–Intruders discovered! Warning! If you don't surrender now.....*

Pepeng! Jijijiji!

There was a ringing sound and the android was covered with a type of powder. The android wasn't able to make noise anymore.

“Hihihihi, how is it? The taste of the Ignition Bullet?”

Tori laughed as he shook a ball like object.

“The Ignition Bullets are useless most of the time. But there is one good use. The powder sprayed contains a special coating that interferes with radio waves. The radio waves are blocked so it can't request help from other guardians. So rest assured and destroy it.”

‘What? There is such an item?’

Ark eyed the scattered metallic powder. Once again, the Silver Hand had taken advantage of the Nakuma's radio waves to hunt a lot of them. The Nakuma's special quality was to send a SOS signal to its colleagues and they amplified that signal several hundred times. So there should be an item to block the SOS signal. In other words, there was an item to allowed users to fight an android 1 on 1.

‘That's why Tori said it is an important item for beginners.....’

He thought it would be good to buy some. Well, that was for after he found the relics.

‘The guardian is an android.....’

A confident smile appeared on Ark's face. During the last fortnight Ark had destroyed a lot of machines. He even came up with a way to overcome his limitations in marksmanship. That was close combat fighting and Close Marksmanship!

“Go, henchman no. 1!”

Tori shouted from behind Ark. The noise was enough to make his motivation fall. However, Ark just pulled out his dagger and revolver and laughed.

“.....I will succeed.”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

The Guardian fired its Gatling gun. Sparks appeared everywhere in the underground passage. And the smell of gunpowder stimulated his nose.

“Shield!”

Ark used his shield to block the projectiles and narrowed the distance. And continued with his dagger! The dagger collided with the Guardian’s shield and it shook. All electronic devices in Galaxian were connected with the Nymphe. Therefore his Infrared Scope also wasn’t working so he couldn’t check the level or health of the Guardian and the shield. However, Ark had fought hundreds of Nakuma.

‘It isn’t an opponent I can’t win against!’

Ark was able to determine this after a few attacks. The only difference from the Nakuma was the Guardian’s lower body. It allowed the Guardian to quickly move backwards and forwards.

‘This will be disadvantageous if the battle continues for a long time. I need to quickly finish this!’

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

The Guardian moved sideways and rampaged with the Gatling gun. Ark turned and ran to the other side. He stepped on a pipe built into the walls, jumped and landed on the upper body of the Guardian. Sparks continuously flew from the Guardian’s shield as Ark kept attacking.

*-Danger! Support! Requesting support! Requesting support!*

The Guardian started calling for assistance once the shield was destroyed. However, the radio waves were blocked by the metallic powder spread by the Ignition Bullet!

“Go to hell!”

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

Ark relentlessly pulled the trigger and attacked the Guardian with his revolver. Every strong point has a weakness. The Guardian's legs gave it high manoeuvrability but it had low defense compared to the Nakuma. If he focused the bullets on the wheels then its movements would also be sealed. Victory or defeat was already decided at this point. The Guardian was immobile and just helplessly fired the Gatling gun as Ark ran around it and attacked. Ark stopped the Guardian's blade with his dagger and fired with the revolver. After many gunshots.....

[-!#\$!%!@!#R! F@\$R@F!@R! ER!@##\$!]

An unidentified message appeared as the Guardian died.

“Ohhh! My no. 1 henchman! I knew you defeated a lot of Nakuma but this was unexpected. Awesome! Hihhi, if you're that skilled then we can easily obtain the artefacts!”

Tori shouted as the Guardian collapsed. The praise from the hamster didn't feel that bad.

“Well, it is just this degree.”

Ark's ego became inflated as he approached the corpse of the Guardian. The Guardian was an android so it also dropped some metal parts. Several metal pieces of good quality could be seen.

‘Surely he won't try to take this away from me?’

Ark quickly collected the metal parts before Tori could. No, he was about to collect it.

“Eh? W-wait? W-what is this?” This is surely.....”

Ark's face became panicked as he saw a mark inscribed on a metal piece. The mark was a space ship and a blue planet. He had seen that mark on R-14.....

“.....The galactic federation?”





# Secret of the Relics

---

“W-why is the mark of the galactic federation.....?”

Ark felt like he had been shot in the head. They came through a tunnel that Ark dug until he felt like dying so why was the mark of the federation on an android he defeated? But there was one thing that was clear. Tori definitely knew something! Ark turned his head. Tori noticed his gaze and flinched.

“What? Why? What have I done?”

“.....Where are we?”

“I told you. The relics are hidden here.”

“Did you think I wouldn’t know?”

Ark held out the metal with the mark of the federation stamped on it.

“Why is an android from the federation in this place?”

“T-that is.....”

Tori anxiously scratched his head. And awkwardly laughed before replying.

“This is the underground facilities of Nephalim’s galactic federation branch.”

“The underground facilities of the galactic federation?”

“That’s right.”

Tori smiled and nodded. Ark started at him with a blank expression before shouting.

“That’s not right! The federation’s underground facility? Weren’t we digging a tunnel to find the relics hidden in Nephalim? So why did we appear in the federation’s underground facility out of nowhere?”

“Because the relics are hidden in the federation’s building.”

“Eh?”

“Our destination is the galactic federation building.”

Tori replied in a casual voice. Ark couldn’t understand what he was saying at first. He dug the tunnel for Tori to look for relics. Yet the galactic federation was the destination? Digging the tunnel to the federation’s underground facility to look for relics.....

Then this guy’s intention.....

“Are you planning to rob the galactic federation?”

“To be precise, it is their museum.”

“M-museum?”

“Yes, the History Museum in the galactic federation building. The museum contains an exhibition about the battle between the federation and the Rama in the past. It occurred hundreds of years ago so the exhibition contains old fashioned equipment that mainly don’t work properly. But these items are popular among collectors. It is possible to sell them through the black market for a high price.”

Ark felt his spirit fly to Andromeda at Tori’s words. He knew Tori was a scamming hamster but he never expected this. Who would’ve expected that a NPC would steal from the federation? No, it didn’t matter if the hamster was caught by the federation and punished. The problem was that Ark was an accomplice! He had only played the game for a month and now he was robbing a government facility? It was no different from quitting the game.

‘My last week.....’

He spent his last week digging? Anger welled in Ark’s chest as he shouted at Tori.

“I’ll kill this crazy hamster bastard!”

“Hik! W-why are you doing this?”

“Why? Why am I doing this? Do you even need to ask?”

“W-what did I do? I told you from the beginning. I’m looking for relics. Did I lie? The items displayed in the museum are clearly relics. Damn, you should think a little bit. The relics wouldn’t just be buried underneath the city. Isn’t it obvious?”

“T-talking like that.....”

Ark glared and pushed Tori away before turning around.

“That’s it! Dammit, I quit! I’m going to tell the federation right now!”

“Is that wise?”

Tori muttered with a mean smile.

“You haven’t grasped the atmosphere yet. You’re the one who dug the tunnel to this location. And you also smashed the android protecting the facility. Yet you want to turn me in? Ha, do it. But do you expect me to close my mouth and not betray you? I’m going to speak. I’ll speak even if I end up dying. I’ll tell them about you. So go ahead and accuse me.”

“You bastard.....!”

“There’s also the issue of your Nymphe. There is no evidence that I made you do it. Furthermore, your Nymphe has an illegal hacking program which is a felony comparable to theft. Anyway, you’re a criminal. Do you think the federation will believe your words?”

Ark felt like he had been hit in the back of the head after hearing Tori’s words. It had been questionable from the beginning. Ark had been wondering why the hamster offered a sudden proposal. It was because Ark was a ‘reliable’ partner. He was already a criminal because of the illegal hacking!

“This bastard, from the beginning.....”

“Of course. I also need a safety device.”

Tori snorted and said.

“Cool off and think again. You’re already a criminal and if you help me rob the museum then you will also benefit. And I didn’t blindly

think of this plan. I've been investigating the federation's security system for a long time. 100%! I have confidence that I will 100% succeed. I can enter the galactic federation building unnoticed. If you help me."

Ark looked shocked. Once again, the same rules in reality were applied to the virtual reality game. One of those rules regarded crime. If a user committed a crime then their criminal value would increase but that was only if they were discovered by a user or NPC. For example, Ark had illegally operated the paid hunting ground on R-14 but he wasn't noticed by Cheksun so he didn't become a criminal. That's why skills like Stealth and Pickpocket existed in games. These skills wouldn't exist if it was that easy to become a criminal. The only exception was in PK, but in that case the user being killed was the witness. Anyway, if the crime wasn't discovered then he wouldn't receive a penalty!

'If it isn't discovered.....'

There wouldn't be any problems. Tori quickly whispered to the shaken Ark.

"Didn't I tell you? I started this because I have 100% confidence. The only thing to be concerned about is the guards but that won't be a problem with the Ignition Bullet. And we'll lock the door and collapse the tunnel after robbing the museum. There is no reason to be discovered. And we can earn relics worth thousands of gold. I assure you."

'Thousands of gold!'

In fact, Ark already had no choice. Ark had dug the tunnel from the junkyard. And he just turned the federation's android in scrap iron.

'Perhaps the message that appeared after I defeated the Guardian.....'

The message probably stated that his criminal value had increased. In other words, Ark had already become a criminal. Besides, he had already illegally hacked some data and his Nymphe was broken!

He had reluctantly become a criminal. If he went to the galactic federation then he would definitely be clapped in chains. If he helped Tori's plan then he won't be trapped in chains. If he joined then he would receive thousands of gold. One side would give profit so there was no need to think about it.

'But.....'

Ark thought for a moment before nodding.

"Okay. Instead we should change the terms and conditions."

"Change the terms and conditions?"

"Of course. I accepted because I thought I was digging to find some relics hidden in the ground. So shouldn't I receive a hazard pay now that there is the risk of becoming a criminal? No, we both have identical risks so isn't it natural to split it 50-50?"

"W-what? No way! This was originally my plan!"

"If you don't like it then fine. I'm just going to surrender to the federation."

"Bah, what are you saying? I told you. The federation won't believe your words!"

"Probably. But if I surrender then won't they consider my extenuating circumstances? Unlike you I'm a pioneer. I don't know what will happen in the future but if I willingly submit then my punishment will be lighter."

Tori became worried by Ark's decisive attitude. He rolled his eyes for a moment before replying.

"O-okay. Then 40%."

"50%."

"D-dammit! Then 45%! And there is still the recovery of your Nymph!"

"50%."

“Don’t you have any common sense involving deals? If I concede then you should also concede something!”

“50%.”

“No! Absolutely not!”

“Really? Then I’ll see you in jail. Bye. Hey, are there any android guards in the area? Hey!”

“W-wait a minute! W-wait! This bastard! O-okay! Okay! 50%! 50%! Is that enough? That’s enough?”

“Then it is a deal.”

Ark laughed as Tori glared at him. He felt like he had become slightly stupid after entering Galaxian but he was still a legendary gamer. Ark’s speciality was grabbing hold of weaknesses and shaking it. Tori was the same. Ark might’ve already crossed the line but he wouldn’t surrender easily. Ark had no choice but there was something he hadn’t considered. Even if Ark became a prisoner, he was just a beginner pioneer so he didn’t have that much to lose. If he was stuck in prison then he would lose a lot of hours but that was it. However, Tori was different. Although it was a junkyard, Tori still had a company in Nephalim. If a crime was discovered then his property would be seized. In other words, the blow he would receive from being arrested was many times larger than Ark

‘I have to take advantage of this.’

That’s why Tori was forced to give 50% of the share!

‘Tori might think that we’ve grasped each other’s weak points…….’

In fact, it might be the same weak point but Tori has a lot more to lose. The larger Tori’s weak point was, the more benefit Ark could get.

‘That damn hamster, he thinks he can keep on tricking me? Now you’re caught. I’ll show him how stupid he is to drag me into this.’

Ark smiled and placed his arm over Tori’s shoulder.

“We’re now riding the same boat so let’s make it good.”

“Sheesh, this guy. What happened to your politeness?”

“What’s wrong with it? Now we’re business partners. Isn’t that right?”

Ark was a business partner.....

It meant he could squeeze as much as possible.

---

Bump!

The floor shook. An object like a periscope was tossed upwards and hit the ground. The periscope looked around restlessly.

“Okay. There are no guards here.”

There was a low voice and two shadows appeared. The two shadows quickly moved like squirrels.

They were the daring criminals trying to rob the federation building, Ark and Tori.

‘We really arrived here.’

Ark glanced at Tori. He was a cheating hamster. This was what Ark had thought about Tori so far. After discovering his robbery plan, ‘bold hamster’ was also added. But another idea was added as they came here and that was ‘capable hamster.’ The galactic federation’s underground building had several layers of security devices. That was the reason Tori had made the tunnel in a straight line.

He obtained information beforehand and dug the tunnel in a blind spot. Ark hadn’t seen that much of his capabilities while digging the tunnel. However, Tori started to demonstrate his true ability after entering the galactic federation building. Ark and Tori entered the underground drain. They headed towards the museum destination from there but there were a lot of androids and security. There were also various traps and CCTV installed that would sound an alarm. Tori was the one who handled all of that. Tori was able to discover the structure of the underground and used his advanced hacking skills to turn off the security devices.



‘He didn’t lie when he said he had been preparing for this for a long time.’

Tori had a good reason for requesting 70% of the share. Anyway, Tori earnestly started working so the federation’s security system wasn’t a problem for Ark. With Ark taking care of the Guardians and Tori the security system, they managed to arrive at their destination after 30 minutes. That was the room where Ark and Tori climbed up into.

“Don’t move for a minute.”

Tori started fiddling with some tools from his pocket. And a cable lowered to the ground and started moving like a snake. The cable moved smoothly until it touched a red light on the opposite wall.

“That is a 3rd class firewall. The one in this room won’t activate.”

Tori laughed as he fiddled with his Nymph.

Buuuung.....

Then the entire room started vibrating. It was the scene he had seen many times where the security was turned off. Tori spread both his arms wide as the security system was jammed

“Hihihihi, now the world is ours for 1 hour.”

The ceiling lights then turned on simultaneously. Ark looked around nervously at the sudden brightness and became astonished. Tori tapped his shoulder and giggled.

“Hihihihi, you don’t need to be tense. I was the one who turned on the lights. This place has been completely isolated from the other facilities so we don’t need to worry about being discovered if I turn on the lights. We won’t be found unless a bomb goes off. So relax and look around comfortably. Because all of this is ours.”

“This is all.....”

Ark turned around with a gaping mouth. He could see that the room was the size of a soccer stadium after all the lights were turned on. Lined up along the spacious walls were guns, swords, armour and

even a rocket launcher. Hundreds of different types of weapons were displayed.

‘It is possible to gather all of this?’

It was amazing! The sight sent his endorphins surging. Ark was watching the exhibit with a blank expression when Tori said.

“Didn’t I say it before? I’ve turned off the security system but this place is different and the system will automatically change every hour. So hurry up. We have 1 hour to scrape everything into the bags and get out.”

“Okay!”

Ark’s eyes flashed and he raised his body. He had to gather all the items. What could make him happier than this? Ark swallowed his saliva and ran around the museum scraping up the items. Guns, swords, armour.....all the items were grabbed by his hand. It felt like he was devouring an entire department store! Honestly, before entering the museum Ark hadn’t been able to shake off an uncomfortable feeling. It was impossible not to be worried about committing a crime. But he didn’t worry about that once he started picking up the items.

‘These are the equipment that the heroes of Istana used in the war hundreds of years ago!’

Like Tori said, most of the equipment in the museum didn’t work properly anymore. However, there should still be a few items that worked. Moreover, the equipment that the heroes used were a mixture of magic and rare items. Even if he only found one such equipment then it would be a jackpot! But there was even more. Even if they didn’t work, there were many buyers that would want equipment the war heroes used. Some were worth dozens or even hundreds of gold. There were hundreds of these items!

‘How much for all of this?’

Ark couldn’t even calculate it in his head.

“Hahaha, now I’m rich!”

“Hihihihi, I’ll become a CEO with this!”

Ark and Tori dreamed of their gold future as they gathered the items. After 20 minutes.....

“Pant pant pant!”

“Pant pant pant pant pant pant!”

Ark and Tori faced each other and panted. They were breathing heavily from running around the museum for 20 minutes and gathering items. But there was a thought that hadn’t entered their minds at all. They swept up hundreds of items, causing their bags to bulge so it was impossible for them to hate it. However, a new problem floated into Ark’s head.

“Wait? How are we going to move this?”

Once again, the bags had swelled to an enormous size. That meant it became very heavy. Ark had packed so many items into the bag that he couldn’t fit even 1 more in. It became so heavy that 2 people lifting it would have trouble.

“Doesn’t the security system automatically change every hour? Don’t we have to gather the rest of the items in 40 minutes and get out of here? But moving all of that.....”

“Do you think I hadn’t considered that before coming here?”

Tori just laughed like Ark’s question was ludicrous. He got up with a moan and approached a sculpture in the centre of the room.

“We’re not going to take everything. There is something really expensive in this room. This is it.”

Tori tapped the sculpture as he spoke. It was a sculpture of two warriors defeating a Rama and dealing the final blow. Tori tinkered with the equipment the two warriors were wearing. It was a heavy armour that made it seem like a giant robot was protecting the humans. No, to be exact it wasn’t armour.

“Have you seen this before? Sometimes the senior guards would wear this. You might not know yet but this is different from armour.

This is a battle suit, a type of hand operated robot.....the body will become several times stronger when supported by this battle suit. I don't have to explain it. You'll know when you use it directly."

"Use it directly?"

"Yes, this is the method of grabbing the bags."

Tori said with a smile.

"This might be a sculpture but the battle suit the heroes are wearing are real. These are the actual battle suits that the two heroes of Nephalim used to defeat the Rama. It was created 100 years ago so the functions are limited but they are extremely coveted by collectors. It is possible to get at least 1000 gold from this. If I change the batteries then we can use it to move the bags."

"W-we can move the bags with this?"

"Of course."

"Then quickly....."

Ark approached the battle suit when Tori interrupted.

"You idiot! Wait. I told you. This battle suit is the most expensive item in the museum. If you just peel it off the sculpture then you might get injured. I need to change the battery and dismantle it. So leave this to me."

Tori pushed Ark back and started working on the battle suit. He took out a tool and started to carefully take it apart.

'That guy, he had a surprisingly delicate side.'

Ark made an awkward expression as he looked at Tori working. At first he thought it was unlucky that he encountered such a hamster but the hamster had many unexpected sides. His ability to neutralize the federation's security system was remarkable. Tori mentioned it the first time they met but he was once a hamster that explored the galaxy. The problem was his greed.....

'Now I've caught that guy's weakness.'

So far he had been one-sidedly exploited.

‘I’ll rather be exploited by this guy then by the federation.’

Ark hadn’t neglected to gather information about sponsors while in Nephelim. He had planned to break the contract with Tori so it was natural to check on other sponsors. Among those, the sponsor Ark was most interested in was the galactic federation since he had a letter of recommendation.

‘But I don’t fit the galactic federation.’

Ark came to that conclusion. A lot of users wanted to sponsor with the federation so there was a lot of information on different forums. It had benefits and disadvantages. The federation was a sponsorship with an air tight binding so it was most like becoming a government servant rather than being supported. The other thing was they gave so many quests it was difficult to do other work.

‘Well, having a lot of quests isn’t exactly a drawback.....’

The problem was that most of them required parties or raids. So associates would gather together to do the quest. It meant he couldn’t monopolize items. The quests could be refused but the federation would impose a penalty. The support would become restricted and if the penalties built up then the contract would be cancelled. In the end, it wasn’t possible to receive substantial support from the federation without doing the quests. They would just be a nominal sponsor.

‘A sponsor like that is the same as Tori.....’

At least Tori didn’t force quests on him as a sponsor. Ark didn’t have to join parties and could go around by himself. By the main point was that Tori was brave enough to rob the federation.

Ark had been terrified when he first heard about it but he didn’t have a law abiding character.

If it gave him benefits then his mind thought it was okay! In that sense, Ark fit rather well with Tori.

‘Yes, this type of sponsor might be better for me. I have to spend 200 gold to break the contract and find another sponsor so maybe I

should just sign a formal contract with this guy?’

Ark thought that as he stared at Tori.

‘Eh? What’s that?’

Suddenly a strange object caught Ark’s eye. Tori had just taken off the foot piece of the battle suit that was pressed against the Rama’s chest. And a 20 cm octagonal object was lodged in the chest.

Unlike the warriors, the Rama was entirely a sculpture except for the octagonal object.

‘This seems to be real.....is it an item the Rama uses?’

Ark quickly looked at Tori after finding an unexpected object. In fact, Ark had placed the museum items in an external bag for a reason. There was a formal 50-50 split agreement so Tori had monitored the bag. That’s because the items in the bag would be distributed after returning to the junkyard. But now Tori was busy replacing the battery of the battle suit.

‘This is an opportunity to pack some items!’

Ark studied Tori’s face and approached the Rama. And he quickly grabbed the octagonal object. At the same time an information window appeared.

[-!\$#!@#\$@##\$!#@@@r@#@#E!]

‘What? An item information window?’

Ark ignored the information window and pulled the item out. Suddenly the octagonal object vibrating violently and a light exploded from the centre of it. Ark glanced at Tori and quickly covered the object with both hands. Then the octagonal object disappeared with the light?

‘Eek? What, what the? Where did it suddenly go?’

-!\$!#\$!%\$#!@@E%! Q!! # \$!  
\$%@\$#%\$#% : # \$!#\$!#%!#\$!#\$!#\$!#@ \$!#\$!\$......

A message window appeared in front of Ark. It was unnecessary to say that the information window contained relevant information about the octagonal object. However, he couldn't read it so he couldn't understand what had happened.

'W-what just happened?'

Ark's eyes blinked stupidly.

"What, what the? What's going on? Did you see something shiny just now?"

Tori said as he turned his head.

"Huh? Shiny? I don't know. I didn't see anything."

Ark quickly replied and shook his head. Tori looked at him doubtfully before turning back around.

"There's no time so just stay still!"

And he started working again for a while.

"That's it. It's released!"

Tori exclaimed as the battle suit made a mechanical sound. And the arms, legs and chest area were released from the sculpture. The battle suit kneeled down with its parts open like it was waiting for a new owner to board!

"This is the battle suits that the senior guards wear....."

The battle suit was basically like a large body armour. But like its name Battle Suit, it was a state of the art battle suit that increased strength, stamina and defense once worn. Of course, the battle suit on display was old so they performance would fall but it would still improve some stats!

'One of these will be mine?'

Ark completely forgot about what just happened and stared at the 2 battle suits. Sometimes he saw people wearing battle suits around Nephalim. When he checked the price, the cheapest one cost 1,000 gold. Even if it was an antique, he never imagined that he would get

a battle suit for free. This was also possible with the help of his sponsor contract with Tori!

‘As expected, it’s better not to break the contract!’

Just as Ark was thinking this. Tori confirmed the time and spoke in an impatient voice.

“There’s 30 minutes left but that isn’t long if we factor in the time it takes to return. I’ll test the operation so you should ready yourself as well.”

Tori entered the battle suit and it covered him with a mechanical hum. The battle suit felt completely different from when it was placed on the sculpture. It gave an overwhelming sense of a huge metal body! It made even a hamster look like a powerful warrior.

“Hihihih. That’s it. That’s it!”

Tori cheered as he moved the battle suit. He placed a huge arm on Ark’s shoulder.

“Ark, that’s it. You should quickly put on the battle suit. Hurry!”

“Okay!”

Ark nodded and quickly applied the battle suit to his body. And he tried to move it.

[-#\$%^&@!@#\$%\$!%\$%\$!#\$!]

A warning message suddenly flashed before his eyes. The ensuing scene was like a nightmare.

Pepepepeng, pepepepeng!

Smoke started to rise from different areas of the battle suit. Tori burst out screaming.

“Heok! T-the thousands of gold battle suit.....A-Ark, you! W-what did you do?”

“W-what did I do? I didn’t touch anything!”



“If you didn’t do anything then why did the battle suit explode?”

“Damn, how should I know?”

Wiiiiii!

A sharp siren sound rang out.

“What, what the? Didn’t you say there was 30 minutes left before the system changes?”

“T-this isn’t the system siren. It is the fire alarm!”

Tori screamed with a sickly pale expression. The smoke emitted from Ark’s battle suit had triggered the fire alarm. Water started pouring down from sprinklers in the ceiling. However, the fire alarm was like a security system to Ark and Tori.

“We’re finished! The guards will soon arrive!”

“B-but the battle suit.....”

“You idiot! Do you expect the exploded battle suit to move? Take it off right now!”

“No, that’s not it.....”

Ark stuttered with a desperate look.

“It won’t open. The battle suit won’t move or open!”

Once again, the battle suit was an equipment that broke into separate parts before being applied.

In order to take it off and on, the panels of the arms, legs and chest had to be opened. However, the panel wouldn’t budge no matter how much he manipulate the device to open it.

“D-did the Nymphe break the battle suit.....?”

Ark raised his head and asked. Tori rushed back and forth and shouted.

“I don’t know! I do not know! I’m sorry but I’m going to run away before the guards get here!”

“W-wait a minute! Y-you have to help me.....”

“No! There’s no more time!”

“This bastard, if I’m caught do you think you will be safe?”

“Damn, who cares if you report me? I can’t die here like this!”

Tori grabbed the bag and jumped through the hole in the floor. And after he quickly jumped in the hold....teok!

The bulging bag got stuck in the hole. In the end, Tori couldn’t even grab the items. While Tori was running away through the hole, Ark was trapped in the battle suit. It was a large metal battle suit that didn’t move. It wouldn’t move no matter what Ark did. And.....

“The museum!”

“Confirm the situation!”

10 guards finally arrived.

“Huk! Intruder! Catch him!”

They had discovered Ark inside the smoking battle suit. The 10 guards aimed their guns towards Ark’s head. In the end, a person was arrested for trying to rob the museum.

“Captain-nim, items from the exhibit are missing!”

“A thief has entered the museum! These are all historical items. Check it carefully to confirm if anything is missing. Hey, check that bag over there!”

The guards lifted the bag stuck in the hold that Tori left behind. And a strange expression appeared on the guards’ faces. A ridiculous hamster wearing a battle suit was lifted up as well. The battle suit clad hamster was Tori.

“This guy?”

“Why is he clenching the bag?”

The guards murmured with an amazed expression.

“Sob sob sob.”

Tori hung from the bag he was holding and tears dripped down his face as he looked at Ark.

“It can’t be helped. Absolutely.....I couldn’t give it up.....”

# Planet Beltana

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‘Already.....I’ve come here.’

The man looked around with a complicated expression. He was the blond disable youth who started Galaxian. He had become a disabled person through an unexpected accident but in reality he wasn’t miserable. His father was the owner of a conglomerate and his father’s financial support meant he wasn’t lacking in anything. It was after he entered Galaxian that he became miserable. His real body had nothing to do with a virtual reality game but he wasn’t used to moving his body after being disabled for a while. In reality, people were considerate of people with disabilities. Even if he was just a decoration.....

However, that wasn’t possible in a virtual reality game. The users looked at him who couldn’t move his body properly and promptly dropped him from the party. Yet he didn’t give up despite the insults. There was a reason he had started Galaxian. He.....in order to meet Ark.

‘Why? Why do I want to meet Ark?’

He had asked the question countless times since starting Galaxian. But he still hadn’t found an answer. No, he knew the way to find the answer. It might be a contradiction but he believed the key lay with Ark. The belief drove him and didn’t allow him to give up. And a chance arrived.

*-Young man, do you want to raise your level?*

While he was being out casted by the users, an octopus had approached him. It was Burum, the president of R-14’s secret hunting ground. His encounter with Burum became a turning point. He heard about Ark’s time in R-14 through Burum. This acted like a guideline for him and he started to imitate Ark’s behaviour. No, he personally requested to go through such hardships. His body didn’t

work properly so he had spent one month cleaning the pipes and hunting the space bugs.....

-Achievement: A new mission related master of R-14 has been born.
---

He was finally able to accomplish the same feat like Ark. However, the discovery of Ark's destination was more significant than the achievement.

'I received 2 recommendation letters from Bhurad and Cheksun when I completed all the quests. I also learnt the Swamp Walking skill from the Charenjok. Additionally, I gained the same R-14 mission related title like Ark. And the frontier Ark chose.....'

A primitive fort city with ultra-modern machines blowing smoke expanded in front of him. The city Nephalim was nestled in a forest on Istana, the capital planet of the galactic federation.

'Here. I've finally arrived.'

A tear formed on the corner of his eye. He felt complex emotions at the thought of being in the same city as Ark. But there was no time to be caught up in the emotions. Ark had arrived at Nephalim for nearly a month. He didn't know if Ark was still around Nephalim or if he had arrived in another area.

Searching for him would be difficult.

'I have no choice but to keep moving.'

He braced himself and took one step.

*–This is your first time in Nephalim.*

A holograph of a beautiful woman appeared next to him.

*-I am a guide that will tell the beginner pioneers pertinent city related information about Nephalim. You can use me to discover the city's geography, the location of the stores and special facilities.*

He wasn't interested so he kept on moving. Various holographic images appeared and made offers to him.

*–You can search the news for all incidents related to Nephalim in the last 50 years.*

He stopped walking. The information service allowed him to find any events that happened in Nephalim. If he was looking for an ordinary user then that wouldn't help. However, he was looking for 'Ark.' He was the best player in another virtual reality game. Ark had even got the title from R-14 just by completing the tutorial. Ark had already spent a month in Nephalim. If it was the Ark he knew.....

That was enough time to leave an amazing reputation.

'It might be surprisingly simple to track Ark.'

He inserted 50 copper and the 3D image of a middle aged man with a thick stomach spoke pleasantly.

*–Welcome. Thank you for using this service. You can read all recent events or use a keyword to search for a specific event.*

"Ark....search for someone with that name....."

*-‘Ark’ is the name of a person? I understand.*

The middle age man searched through a thick book.

*-Oh, I found it. An incident recently occurred with someone of the same name.*

'Indeed!'

He was already on the local news about the area. He expected it but the emotions he felt was difficult to describe. He spoke with an impatient voice.

"The incident.....the detailed information.....the place he is now.....can you tell me?"

*–All the relevant information regarding the event and the regional area will be shown.*

The middle age man nodded and changed into a 3D newspaper. The contents of the event scrolled upwards like a video and the related

images were shown. The blond youth's face warped strangely as he read the contents.

“.....W-what is this?”

### **The attempted robbery of the galactic federation's museum.**

**A week ago, there was an unprecedented event as thieves tied to steal from the Victory Memorial at the galactic federation's museum. According to the announcement from the galactic federation, the human called [Ark] and the owner of an ironworks called Tori dug a tunnel to enter the museum.**

**The galactic federation believes that they planned this for a long time and judged that stealing from the exhibit of war heroes is a severe crime. Tori will be stripped of his property to pay the federation for any damages and will be imprisoned for 2 years on the orbit prison Stael.**

**And his accomplice, the pioneer [Ark] will be forcibly conscripted into military service. As a part of the forced military service, he will be dispatched to a war area and join the prisoner unit until he earns enough achievements. [Ark] is sentenced to the disputed area Beltana until he earns 3,500 achievements.**

#### **-Disputed Planet Beltana-**

Beltana is a planet 12 light years away from Istana in the Bellin constellation. Beltana was a colony ruled by the ancient race 'Murat' but it was thrown away when the Murat left.

Since then, there is an average temperature of -50 degrees and the planet is battered by blizzards. However, a large source of Iridium was discovered on Beltana and the federation has been engaged in a war with the Rama over the planet. However, the federation has experienced difficulties despite the steady dispatch of troops and prisoners.

\* Current Occupation: Rama 62% – Galactic Federation 38%

“Please! I was tricked by the hamster!”

“That’s a lie! I’m just an unsuspecting hamster! That guy planned everything!”

In the video playing, a hamster and a guy with black hair was exclaiming while handcuffed. The dark-haired man.....was the ‘Ark’ from his memory.

---

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

The temperature of the world was so low that the air seemed to freeze. Armoured vehicles were crossing the wilderness covered by ice and snow. The enormous armoured car was 100 metres in length and was the anti-tank transportation the federation nicknamed Memeod. 100 people were sitting inside the swaying armoured car. They were soldiers armed with weapons and basic military equipment. But their faces didn’t look like soldiers. The sunken eyes had no motivation, their faces were so thin they looked like skeletons and the skin was darkened and dead.....

‘They look like they’re going to die in a few minutes.’

Ark sighed and shook his head.

‘It is natural.’

Ark was different from the other soldiers. The zombie like soldiers with no spirit and sunken skin were criminals forcibly conscripted from various cities on Istana and dispatched to Beltana. Ark and Tori were arrested two days ago for attempting to rob the museum and he was forced to join the prisoner unit.

‘At that time.....’

Ark wasn’t significantly depressed. Of course, the situation was very bleak. If the robbery succeeded then Ark would’ve been buried in gold and would spend each day happy. However, the fire alarm had unexpectedly activated because of the breakdown of the battle suit and he was arrested with the stolen goods confiscated. The



federation also seized all his equipment and items as compensation for the damage, including his 100 gold. His dream of thousands of gold flew away as he became a beggar. Just thinking about it caused his stomach acid to rise. But Ark's misfortune didn't stop there. He was transferred to Beltana until he collected 3,500 achievements. Despite falling to the bottom.....

'I can use this chance to restart my awareness of the game!'

That was Ark's thought when he received the judgement. Ark also received some positive things.

Naturally there was a reason for it. The first thing was the automatic cancellation of his contract with Tori. Once again, Tori was also arrested and his business and assets seized. Therefore he lost his Gear junkyard and Ark's contract was voided.

'I don't have to pay the 200 gold.'

Ark had been thinking about maintaining his contract with Tori. But he learned through this incident.

The path of a criminal was dangerous. The lure of crime was tempting because of the benefits but Tori ended up with his assets seized. Didn't Ark also become like this because of Tori? So he came to the conclusion that it was better to break his relationship with the hamster Tori. Tori was sentenced to two years of prison so the problem was neatly solved. But the things he was expected ended here.

'The thing I couldn't expect.....'

It was related to his Nymphe. His Nymphe had been broken by an unknown computer virus. This was the thing Ark had been most worried about before the stealing incident. However, his problem with the Nymphe was settled so easily that he felt almost empty.

"You will be deprived of all your freedom until you gain 3,500 achievements on Beltana. In accordance with the laws of the federation, the defendant will receive the Prisoner body coating."

The judge in the courtroom read the contents of his sentence. Body coating was a process where the body's genes were rearranged,

allowing them to adapt to the space environment. The users stats would be readjusted upwards depending on the direction such as a warrior, scout etc. He now gained a ticket. Of course, the Prisoner body coating was different from the other ones. Beltana was a disputed planet that hadn't been terraformed. The oxygen was thin and the temperature was -50 degrees so body coating was needed to survive on Beltana. Therefore he received a temporary body coating that would be cancelled when the penalty ended.

-The body coating has been completed! Ark-nim's current body coating is 'Prisoner.'			
Character Information Window			
<b>Name</b>	Ark (R-02788)	<b>Level</b>	28
<b>Species</b>	Human	<b>Occupation</b>	Pioneer
<b>Crime</b>	3,500		
<b>Health</b>	500 (+15)	<b>Mental Power</b>	250
<b>Strength</b>	85 (+3)	<b>Agility</b>	115
<b>Stamina</b>	95 (+3)	<b>Wisdom</b>	15
<b>Intelligence</b>	45	<b>Luck</b>	15
* Title: Cleaning Foreman (Agility + 3)			
* Body Coating: Prisoner			
+ The Prisoner coating is limited to the region of Beltana.			
+ Your body information will belong to the galactic federation after receiving the Prisoner coating.			
+ You are unable to receive any other body coating until the Prisoner coating is removed.			

'This is a big deal. My Nymphe will be taken away when I receive the body coating. The hacking program on my Nymphe will be detected. And my crime will go up.'

Ark trembled with anxiety as he was entered the body coating machine. However, his body coating process was completed with no problems and the information window surfaced. He hadn't even realized that he had gone up 1 level.

"Eh? The information displayed is normal?"

A normal information window was shown on his Nymphe. Ark became aware of the reason after he was dispatched to Beltana. The body coating rearranged his genetic information and

amplified his body's resistance against harm. The adjustment to the body was coordinated through several functions on the Nymphe. Therefore his Nymphe would also be upgraded when he received a body coating. It was the same for the Prisoner coating. The penalties associated with the Prisoner coating was registered on the Nymphe.

“So....the Nymphe is upgraded when receiving the Prisoner coating.....”

This meant his Nymphe received a new OS. That was the reason Ark's Nymphe became normal. The new OS wrote over the old one and all his problems were resolved!

“Wait? If my Nymphe became normal through the Prisoner coating then couldn't I have raised my level a bit more to 30 and receive the body coating?”

The method to restore the Nymphe was surprisingly simple. Tori was a cunning fellow who definitely knew that.

“There's no doubt. That hamster! He scared me on purpose so I would become his accomplice!”

Anger towards Tori welled up inside him again. However, Tori had his property confiscated and was in jail so his anger was slightly alleviated. There was no way for that hamster to make money now. Anyway, his problem with the Nymphe was unexpectedly settled.

“What's this?”

Ark checked the restored Nymphe and found something strange. Next to the character information icon, equipment icon etc. were 3 icons he never saw before. There were 2 folders called Backup-1, Backup-2 and an icon that looked like armour.

“Backup? What is this?”

Ark clicked on the Backup-1 folder and the information window appeared.



-The skill data from your previous Nymphé has been registered.
<p>* Passive *</p> <p>Space Combat (User): Strength, Agility, Stamina, Intelligence, Wisdom +0.5%</p> <p>Close Marksmanship (User): Hit rate -5%, Attack +10%</p> <p>Facilities Maintenance (User): Maintenance Speed +30%</p> <p>Dig (User): Digging Speed +30%, Chance of finding items and minerals +30%</p>
<p>* Active *</p> <p>Hacking (User): Able to release level 1~3 electronic locks.</p>
<p>* Software *</p> <p>Invaders Ver 1.0</p>

“Ohu!”

Now Ark was able to understand the situation. Backup-1 contained the skill information from Ark’s previous Nymphé. While the old OS had been overwritten, an automatic backup of the data on the system had been created.

“This really.....”

Ark made a strange expression. When he received the Prisoner coating, the process searched the Nymphé for information and automatically deleted any illegal data. Therefore Ark thought he would have to create the program again. The program he spend a fortnight creating being deleted was really frustrating! But the coating machine couldn’t search Ark’s Nymphé for data because it was broken. So it just proceeded to overwrite it and the hacking program was processed as backup!

“Luck hasn’t completely abandoned me.”

He was lucky in the midst of some unhappiness.

“Then what is Backup-2?”

Ark’s eyes naturally turned to the second folder.

“The name of the folder indicates it is a backup of an old Nymphé.....”

But Backup-1 already contained all of Ark’s data. He couldn’t remember anything else.

Ark tilted his head with confusion and clicked the Backup-2 folder. The information window contained a file he never saw before.

-Logbook~04

.....It was an exceptionally long voyage.

The brilliant shine of the stars gradually disappeared until all I could find was darkness.

That was the first time I encountered the creature called the Ikirium.

The Ikirium are ghost stories passed between the space ship’s crew. They exist like ghosts drifting in outer space and will take form by touching metal like the Nakuma. Our voyage became much more dangerous with the appearance of the Ikirium. However, my brave crew decided to confront the Ikirium to defend the ship.

Unlike me, the crew had experienced many space voyages and I was able to learn a lot while fighting the Ikirium with them. The gun techniques and Sword Mastery learnt from the experienced crew were especially useful on the expedition.

The gun and sword techniques places focus on mental power.....

“Logbook? Why is this on my Nymphé?”

Ark muttered and frowned as he read it. He remembered picking up unknown data. The data from the toy airplane!

“Don’t tell me this is.....?”

This was the data contained on the toy airplane? Ark felt strange at the thought. He had expected something great from the data which

was why he invested a fortnight into learning the hacking skill. Besides, he became a criminal thanks to the problem the data caused his Nymph.

“But it is just the logbook of someone I don’t know!”

No, that wasn’t the point. It was common to experience such things when playing a game. Why did his Nymph become broken when he downloaded the logbook data? Ark became a criminal so he couldn’t just laugh it off.

“Dammit! This thing! This thing! Give me something!”

Ark flipped through the pages for a while. Finally he reached the last few pages of the logbook. Then an information window appeared in front of him.

-You have gained spiritual enlightenment from the materials the prophet left behind.
--

-A new skill (Common Occupation ☆☆☆) has been learnt.
---

Set Bullets Shooting (User, Active): Just like its name, a set of bullets will be fired like a whirlwind.
---

If you gather the ammunition and pull the trigger than up to 3 bullets will be shot at once. When the trigger is pulled, the 3 bullets will be released with 2.5 times the destructive power. However, a lot of burden is placed on small guns so the durability will quickly decrease.
---

< 3 bullets will be fired with 2.5 times the attack power and the probability of missing will double>
---

Applicable Weapons: All weapons except for machine guns and rocket launchers.
---

Mental Power consumption: 20
------------------------------

-A new skill (Common Occupation ☆☆☆) has been learnt.
---

Sonic sword (User, Active): If you concentrate your Mental Power then it is possible to increase the body’s potential for a short time
--

and attack explosively. The sword will move at the sound of speed and contain strong destructive power. In addition, the blade will create a shock wave when it breaks through to the speed of sound.

<Sword damage increased by 50%, all enemies within 5 metres will be affected by the shock wave>

Applicable Weapons: All types of swords

Mental Power consumption: 30

“Eh?”

Ark’s eyes looked shocked.

“S-skill? And 3 star rated skills.....”

Ark murmured and raised his head. A 3 star rated skill in Galaxian meant it wasn’t that easy to obtain. The method to learn it changed depending on the number of stars and 3 stars meant a skill directly learnt by studying with the NPC or skill books. However, Ark had never learnt a combat skill from a NPC. Then there is only one answer!

“The pages that I just turned must detail how the protagonist of the logbook learnt the combat skills from his colleagues. This logbook must be.....skill book!”

This was why Mald bought the toy airplane for 60 gold. He could figure out what happened.

Mald had clearly known from the first time he saw the toy airplane that it contained a skill book.

The cunning fellow tried to use an excuse to snatch the toy. However, Ark was tricked.....he ended up catching a rat. He had suffered a lot in the meantime so he just released his stress using Mald. Now the dismal feeling of being banished to a disputed planet also disappeared.

“I learnt 2 battle skills. That alone makes it worthwhile to learn hacking. Well, I’m stuck in the prisoner unit of Beltana but it isn’t that bad.”

He had already learnt the hacking skill. Beltana wasn't overflowing with users like Nephalim so it was better for hunting. This was a place where he could fight so he didn't dislike it. The prisoner status was uncomfortable but he just learnt new skills so wasn't this the best environment to hunt? He was drafted which meant there wouldn't be that many chances to obtain items so experience was a priority.

"What? When I think about it, it isn't that bad?"

Instead of being bad, he actually thought it was rather fortunate. Therefore Ark was motivated as he passed through the Star Gate connected to Beltana.

"Prisoner number 1056, Ark. Move to Beltana!"

"Yes! I'm going!"

His eyes brightened as he plunged into the Star Gate! He was brimming with motivation as he arrived at Beltana.

"Listen carefully, you trash!"

A rough voice was heard as he arrived at Beltana. A middle age man with a huge figure and a thick scar on his face addressed the prisoners. He was the commander in charge of managing the drafted prisoners, Peratul. Peratul surveyed the 30 new prisoners and began to talk.

"The soldiers in the main building don't expect much from you. I only expect you to avoid the bullets. Do you understand? You guys are lucky since your bodies can be recycled with the Fairy. It is the reason why you guys are here. You can revive when you die. Scapegoats like you are needed in the war to help the elite soldiers survive."

The Fairy body regeneration system couldn't revive everyone. It was only possible for users and some NPCs. That's why the name pioneer was created to distinguish the users and NPCs that could resurrect using the Fairy. Pioneers were an important element in the war. Like Peratul said, they could just revive so they were like infinite resources. That's why normal NPCs like Tori were locked in jail while



pioneers like Ark were dispatched to disputed areas when they committed a crime.

“Even lowlifes like you gain enough merit then you will be pardoned. But don’t think it will be that easy to gain merit. This place is a lot more dreadful than you think. Throw away any expectations you have right now. I assure you. Your body will just be torn asunder like trash after a few years. If you want to live then move. Crawl on the ground and ask for help. That is the only way for guys like you to come back alive!”

He didn’t know what to do with the military regulations that threatened them. However, Ark gained some skills so he didn’t pay attention to those words. The other prisoners who just arrived at Beltana were the same as well. For pioneers, fighting was a part of their daily lives. There was no reason to be tense about coming to a dangerous place. So several pioneers started smirking and chatting after hearing Peratul’s words.

“Battalion Commander Peratul-nim.”

Then a female military officer ran into the barracks. The prisoners whistled and made noise.

“Oh! Pretty good?”

“Is that her real face? Shall we see it outside?”

“These bastards really……!”

Peratul glared at the prisoners with a fierce expression. But the military officer just spoke without paying attention to the prisoners.

“Battalion Commander-nim, the scouting unit has reported signs that the Rama have moved to area D-23. The Commander has demanded that the prisoners be sent to determine the power of the enemy. The regular troops will be dispatched afterwards.”

A smile spread on Peratul’s face as the female officer’s words.

“Yes, that’s great. These guys should realize the reality of this place.”

Peratul looked at the prisoners before saying.

“Did everybody hear? Are any of you confused about the commands? You guys have no rights here. Experience is better than hundreds of words. Yes, this is an opportunity for you to learn from the battlefield. Everybody stand up! We’re moving to the battlefield!”

“Yes!”

“I’ve been getting bored!”

The prisoners burst out with joy and stood up at Peratul’s order. Ark was one such prisoner. Ark exited the barracks with a confident expression.

“Huk! W-what the hell?”

Ark exclaimed as he saw the soldiers gathered in front of the barracks. There were 100 hollow skinned soldiers.....

“You guys have been placed in Beltana’s prisoner unit. You’re going to be with them for a long time so you should become familiar with them. Hey you guys, your break has ended. We are going to the battlefield.”

The prisoners turned pale at Peratul’s words. The zombie like prisoners seemed to become even more zombie like.

‘Why did their faces become like that?’

Ark and the new prisoners thought at the sight of the senior prisoners panicking. The atmosphere of the normal soldiers in the area was different as they giggled.

“Kikikiki, newcomers have arrived.”

“A Rama unit has been discovered a short time ago. You guys are heading there?”

“I wonder how many will come back intact.”

“Not a lot of them.”

“Hey! Do you guys want some advice? If you give gold to the

authorities then we might take care of you on the battlefield. It is better than being crushed to pieces every day.”

“Hey, stop it. They’re new so do you think they will understand?”

“Indeed, they’ll only understand after being crushed.”

The regular soldiers said as they suddenly swarmed. Some of the new prisoners sweated from the words the regular troops spat at them but Ark didn’t pay attention to it. He just needed to prove his skills on the battlefield. The soldiers would stop once he gained some merits. And Ark had confidence in his abilities.

‘Avoid the bullets? Heh, that’s funny. I am Ark. The battlefield is my stage! It shouldn’t take me a long time to earn 3,500 achievements. I will be the faster prisoner to be pardoned in Galaxian’s history.’

So Ark moved to the strategy area with the rest of the prisoners. They arrived at D-23 and a considerable number of enemy troops could be seen on the horizon.

“Now shall I get started?”

Ark checked his equipment and started concentrating. Suddenly a cloud of smoke emerged from the enemy camp that was several kilometres away. The senior prisoners yanked their hair and started screaming.

“Dammit! I knew it! I knew it!”

“What? What’s with these guys all of a sudden?”

“Eh? W-what is going on?”

Then one of the new prisoners pointed towards the sky. The new prisoners turned their heads towards the indicated direction and became amazed.

“Oh my god! T-that.....”

“Missiles! Projectiles! It is a heavy artillery attack!”

Tu tu tu tu! Kwa kwa kwa kwa! Syu syu syu syu! Pepeng!

There was a violent roaring sound that seemed to break the eardrums. The smoke from the enemy camp was the signal for a long distance assault. Various heavy weapons poured devastating attacks on the heads of the prisoners. Flames rose all over the place! The ground shook and rocks and dirt flew upwards. The problem was avoiding the attacks. The whole area where the prisoners were disappeared from the firepower! Ark who was holding the dagger was wrapped in a wave of heat. The same thing happened to the other prisoners. They couldn't even properly swing their weapons before they were smashed and scattered all over the place.

"T-this is....."

Ark's bloody body was on the ground as he looked around. It had only been 1 minute since the battle started. In just 1 minute, 50 prisoners had been torn to pieces and frozen by Beltana's harsh atmosphere. And that was just the beginning.

"Num! Kara! Marakana! Okara! Akarana!"

The voice of the enemy was heard as they rushed towards the prisoners. They were hundreds of monsters in the form of a mantis that had been biologically engineered by the Rama. The bio-weapons called Carack were weaker than the Rama soldiers but they were sufficient to take care of the prisoners devastated by the heavy artillery.

.....It was impossible for them to fight. Hundreds of Carack flocked like mosquitoes and the prisoners instantly became corpses. Ark desperately fought but ended up dying from dozens of Carack. Peratul's voice was heard from behind as all the prisoners collapsed.

"The enemy's main forces have moved! Send in the regular troop!"

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

The regulars started moving from the rear. Hundreds of androids designed for battle, heavy artillery, soldiers wearing battle suits and the thousands of regular soldiers had started moving! Ark started to

understand Peratul's words.

'Avoid the bullets.....'

It was an accurate representation. The Beltana prisoners weren't soldiers. The prisoners were meat shields sent in first to take the bulk of the firepower. They were shields used to stop the heavy artillery from hitting the main troops. From then on, Ark and the prisoners were mobilized for battle a few times but the number of soldiers who survived could be counted with his fingers.

'Earning 3,500 achievements in a place like this.....'

Ark participated in battle three times and he died three times. Of course, Ark hadn't believed there wouldn't be huge penalties from dying. Unlike the regular soldiers, the prisoners couldn't use the Fairy for free. Instead of paying money, the prisoners had to pay their achievement points in order to resurrect. It was different according to the level so Ark needed to pay 100 achievements. On the other hand, he was given 50 achievement points just for entering the battlefield. Therefore he received -50 achievements every time he died. And the prisoners weren't able to obtain any achievements. If they went on the battlefield then there was a 100% chance of dying! So Ark's achievements after a week had passed.....

**[-Current Achievements: -127]**

Rather than earning achievements, his had fallen by 127 points. It would've been -150 but he earned some points from killing the Carack. However, there was another really distressing part.

Gu gu gu gu.....

There was a ponderous noise as the Memeod moved through the mud. When the back door opened, Peratul looked at the zombie like prisoners and said.

"We've arrived. Everybody get off. If you don't want to then you don't have to get off."

Peratul said with a smile. However, there was a small scuffle as all the prisoners tried to jump off. Beltana was a disputed planet

because it was possible to obtain Iridium. Iridium was a general resource used throughout space so whoever obtained Beltana would have access to a vast quantity of Iridium. And the reason the prisoners were trying to pick up the Iridium.....

“Urgh! Iridium! Look for Iridium!”

“I’ve already ate all my space rations!”

“If this continues then I’ll starve! I have to use every possible method to find the Iridium!”

.....This was the reason. They were soldiers but also prisoners. And the galactic federation couldn’t allow the prisoners to eat for free. Bullets and repaired equipment was needed to fight but essential supplies for survival like food and water weren’t for free. If the prisoners wanted to obtain supplied then they had to pay for it through loot obtained on the battlefield or Iridium. However, the prisoners instantly died so it was difficult for them to loot anything. So they were forced to gather Iridium. Of course, it wasn’t an easy task.

“Iridium!”

“Ohhhh! Mine! It’s mine!”

Iridium could be gathered but it wasn’t scattered everywhere. As more time passed, it was difficult to find huge amounts. Thus, only Iridium the size of fingernails could be seen and the prisoners would all flock towards it. Iridium paid for food so actual fighting broke out among the prisoners over it. Ark was no different. He needed to raise his achievements to be pardoned. But there was a 50% penalty to his abilities if his satiety fell. And he would die of starvation if it reached 0. Of course, their satiety would reach 50% if they resurrected after starving to death. But they had to suffer from hunger as soon as they revived. That’s why the prisoners turned into a zombie unit. It was a miserable life where they starved and then had to become meat shields on the battlefield.

‘If I’m hungry on the battlefield then I can’t avoid the bullets!’

But there was even more. If they couldn’t gain Iridium then they

couldn't repair the broken equipment and couldn't fight. They couldn't even dream of escaping Beltana. So no matter how miserable it was, they were forced to step on each other to gain a piece of Iridium.

"This place.....is hell!"

Ark moaned as his skin became thinner after several days.

# The 3rd Group (PART: 1)

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“Dammit!”

A curse naturally emerged. He saw the same information window every time he died on the battlefield. But this time he hadn't been killed on the battlefield. He had wandered away from the unit while searching for Iridium and had been discovered by a Carack scouting unit. Killed on the battlefield, dying while picking Iridium.....

“This is a complete thrashing.”

That wasn't the whole problem. Ark had taken a few steps. Then there was a sound effect and a red warning message floated in front of him.

<p>-Your satiety had fallen to 20% and you are in a 'hungry' state. &lt;Your stats have fallen by 50% and you will die if satiety reaches 0%&gt;</p>
--

‘In the end I'm hungry.....’

A sigh emerged from Ark's mouth as he grabbed his stomach. Ark had gone to extract Iridium twice in two days. Iridium harvesting was similar to finding gold dust. They had to find a small piece of Iridium in the dirt. However, the competition was fierce among prisoners and he had failed to collect the amount required for food. And his satiety had fallen until he reached the 'hunger' state. The countdown to starvation had started.

“Not only do I have to worry about dying in battle, I also have to worry about starving to death.....”

This was the first time he had been so miserable since playing online games.

But Ark braced himself.



‘Yes, I am Ark. I can’t collapse from this much. There is always an escape hole even if the sky is falling. If I endure then I will find a way. I’ll endure. Hang in there. I just have to hold on and avoid starving to death!’

Ark had realized something during his time here. The minimum condition for survival on Beltana was the procurement of food. The satiety system also existed in Galaxian. If satiety fell below 50% then penalties would be applied to the stats. That was the reason Ark died so easily when he was found by 10 Carack. With his stats decreased by 50% thanks to the 20% satiety, Ark couldn’t even deal with scouting Caracks. No, he couldn’t even run away before being skewered and dying.

‘The problem is this situation is difficult to escape from once it happens.’

If he died of starvation then satiety would be restored when he resurrected. However, satiety would only recover to 50%. A penalty was received as soon as he revived. Of course, the chances of surviving on the battlefield would decrease with the penalty. He also received a -50 achievement if he fought but if he died of starvation then he would lose another 100 achievement points. It was like a vicious cycle of borrowing money from loan sharks and then borrowing even more to pay off the previous debt. Now Ark’s biggest target was a meal.

‘I’m lucky despite that.’

Ark sighed with relief as he looked at his backpack. He had realized the importance of food supply and started gathering Iridium. Although he became too greedy and died from wandering off, at least he wouldn’t die of starvation. He was satisfied when he saw the amount he gathered.....

Korururu.

“Ah! Damn, my stomach seems to be twisting with pain. Let’s hurry.”

Ark grabbed his starving stomach and ran across the base. He finally arrived at the supplies distribution tent near the prisoners’

barracks. Ark heard some shocking words.

“It’s not enough.”

A woman in an officer’s uniform said in a serious voice. Her name was Irina. She was the female officer who talked to Peratul the first time Ark arrived at Beltana. She was an eye-catching beauty who caught the interest of the prisoners when they saw her for the first time. But no prisoners dared throw a joke at her after a few days. There were two reasons. One was that she was in charge of distributing the supplies that was like a lifeline to the prisoners and the other.....

“It’s not? What are you saying?”

“Can’t you see it?”

Irina indicated the scales in front of the supplies. The Iridium Ark had gathered was placed on the scale and had stopped between 99 and 100.

“100 grams is required for Space Food. Unfortunately you are lacking the required amount.”

“T-that.....you won’t give me food because I am lacking 0.5 grams?”

“You are still lacking even if it is only by 0.5 grams.”

“T-that is ridiculous!”

“It is the rules.”

“W-wait a minute! My satiety had already fallen to 20%! If I can’t purchase food this time then I will die of starvation before the next harvesting operation!”

“Then it will be like that. I’ll see you next time.”

Irina dropped the death penalty on him with an emotionless face.

.....This was the second reason the prisoners stopped showing their interest. Ark and the prisoners shabby forms were thin and sunken in from starvation. Anyone looking would feel sympathy! However, Irina was so lacking in compassion that she

would let him die even if he was lacking 0.5 grams. The prisoners had a bad impression of the woman who let them starve.

“Damn, what type of business is this? How anal retentive.”

“There’s no doubt that she’s an ill-tempered old woman in her 40’s in reality.”

“As expected, it isn’t possible to believe the faces in the game.”

It was now accepted as fact among the prisoners that Irina was a lady in her forties. However, Ark didn’t care if Irina was old or not. If he couldn’t get any food this time then he would die of starvation.

“It’s really terrible!”

Ark shouted angrily.

“Of course I’m a prisoner. But I’m also a soldier fighting for the federation. Right now a soldier is starving to death. And I’m only lacking 0.5 grams at most. Yet you just want me to starve?”

Ark’s sympathy plan didn’t work so he tried to use logic.

“Didn’t I tell you? It is the rules.”

As expected, it didn’t work.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re missing 0.5 grams or 0.1 grams. If you’re finished then get out of the way.”

‘This.....this.....damn female!’

Deep anger at the federation boiled in his chest. Ark wanted to stab her even more than the Carack!

However, Ark pushed down his anger. She was the quartermaster for the prisoners. Prisoners could do nothing against her.

‘But if I can’t get food this time then I’ll starve and die. Only.....’

Ark worried a while before using his last resort. Ark hadn’t understood when he saw the prisoners the first time he came to Beltana. Beltana was a planet with a temperature of -50 degrees Celsius. Even if he had the body coating which adapted his body to the harsh environment, he still felt the cold. Yet there were quite a

few shirtless prisoners. But Ark could now understand the reason.

“I will use this!”

Ark took off his jacket and handed it to Irina. This was the reason why the prisoners were shirtless.

Iridium wasn't the only way to get supplies. Various loot obtained from the Rama and the equipment the prisoners were wearing could also be exchanged for supplies. But when they were arrested, all the items were confiscated. He was only left his equipment and weapons. It was all in order not to die of starvation.

“Hmm, this amount is worth 3 Space Foods.

And his coat was exchanged for 3 Space Foods. He felt chilled to the bone after taking off the coat. Ark became a ‘prisoner who was starving’ to a ‘bare and starving prisoner.’

‘I’ve sold my armour.....what now?’

Ark asked as he withdrew from the supplies tent.

“Hey, you over there.”

Suddenly a group of soldiers approached from the side. They wore the mark of the galactic federation. A sigh naturally flowed out when he saw the shiny equipment. Ark had also received the scouting offer from the galactic federation and never replied. However, he judged that they didn't fit together. That was what Ark regretted most about going to Beltana. The regular troops on Beltana were all pioneers contracted with the galactic federation. They were dispatched by the federation and could use the Fairy and get supplies for free. They also received achievements and could get various equipment according to how much points they earned. A lot of soldiers also received battle suits if they earned enough achievements.

‘If I had accepted Ponon's offer then.....’

Ark had put them off. However, he had then been caught in a contract with the hamster. In the end, he became a criminal and was forever deprived of the opportunity to contract with the federation. He was a stripped prisoner so he looked at the

federation soldiers with jealous eyes. He grasped the status different with just one glance.

“Are you a user?”

There was a status difference so he had no choice but to stomach the rude tone. Ark nodded and the man with a square chin laughed.

“You, do you want to get out of here?”

Ark was confused by the sudden question. The guy placed his arm over Ark’s shoulder and spoke in a low voice.

“In fact, I have an offer for you.”

“Offer?”

“Yes, you’ve been here for a while so you should know the atmosphere right? Frankly, it is impossible for a prisoner to gain enough achievements to be pardoned. It is difficult to gain enough food not to die of starvation let alone any achievement points. It seems you’ve also realized that as you took off your upper armour. But it won’t be difficult to get food and achievements if we help you. Of course, you’ll have to show some sincerity in return.”

“Show some sincerity.....how?”

“Kikikik, you know. You’re a user. I’m also a user.”

“That.....”

“Users have their own way of communicating. It is simple. You just need to show your sincerity through my account. Then we’ll pay attention to you. We will protect you from the long range bombing. We’ll also allow you to build up achievements. It will only cost 2 million won. How about it? Wouldn’t that be better than quitting the game?”

‘T-this bastard.....’

Ark frowned as he heard those words.

‘Who does this fellow think I am?’

He was amazed by those words. Who was Ark? He was a legendary gamer. The reason he started Galaxian was because he was commissioned by the government. He might be a prisoner, shirtless and starving but still! Still! A legendary gamer couldn't give money to people to protect him! It was a blow to his pride! Ark had almost reached his limit.....

"That.....I can't afford it right now."

"Really?"

The man with a square jaw laughed.

"Then if you find the money then look for me. I am Valencia of the 1st armoured platoon."

The man called Valencia laughed and left. He was so angry he wanted to drive a bullet into someone. But like the supplies tent, he had no choice but to stomach it. Even if he survived the long distance bombing, he still had to fight the Rama in close combat.

At this point, the survival of the prisoners depended on the actions of the regular troops.

If the regular troops helped then their survival rate would increase by leaps and bounds. Especially if they were the users from Valencia's 1st armoured platoon. Wearing battle suits, they were the elite federation troops. Of course, Ark never thought of paying money for help. If he was someone other than Ark then he probably would've paid for help. However, his pride wouldn't allow him to no matter the circumstances. He rejected it because he couldn't bear to pay money. It could also be more harmful than helpful. They might increase the chances of survival but not by that much.

"First that woman at the supplies tent and now that man. It is enough to make me miserable."

Ark murmured with a bitter expression.

"Those guys are dangerous."

A voice was heard from close by. He turned his head and saw a prisoner. A few days had passed since Ark came to Beltana so he already knew some of the prisoners. The old man was the most

senior person in the prisoner unit and was an NPC called Mellin.

“Our difficulties are because of those guys.”

“Huh? What are you saying?”

“Ah, of course you wouldn’t know about it.”

Mellin scratched his head and complained.

“In fact, the circumstances weren’t that bad when I arrived at Beltana. The circumstances were similar to now but the prisoners could gather a lot of Iridium so they didn’t need to worry about food. But a few months ago, the Rama managed to break the stalemate and secured a wide area. There are so many scouting units that we can’t go far from the base to extract Iridium.”

Ark also knew all of that. The 1st armoured platoon said they could help Ark but they were also defeated on the battlefields. Of course, they gained quite a bit of equipment and achievements before dying but the federation was losing the war. The Rama and the federation were technically at a stalemate. The decisive act to win was destroying the opponent’s Fairy and Star Gate. Therefore satellite and radar weapons were mobilized to find the enemy’s stronghold where the Fairy and Star Gate were contained. However, it was difficult for them to detect each other. Therefore the Rama continuously used the Carack and the federation used the androids to search for the enemy’s stronghold. But in battles, the troops that were defeated had their ground taken away. They would continuously do this until the soldiers ended up retreating back to their home base. Currently, the war situation on Beltana was 7:3 in the favour of the Rama.

‘Well, it doesn’t matter to me if the federation wins or not.....’

However, the prisoners were in a serious situation because the areas containing Iridium were being taken away. Not only was Iridium difficult to get, the chances of being attacked by a Rama scouting unit also increased.

“Why doesn’t the federation send more reinforcements?”

“They don’t have any.”

Mellin responded in a deep voice.

“Beltana isn’t the only place where the Rama and federation are fighting. Although it isn’t a complete war, the federation and Rama are fighting in several places around the Galaxy. In fact, compared to other regions the Beltana battlefield is quite small. So the federation can only dispatch the prisoner unit. Listening to the regular soldiers talking.....”

Mellin whispered in a low voice.

“I heard that an amazing person has recently appeared among the Rama. There had been fierce battles between the Rama and the federation all over the universe. The federation was dominant but that changed 180 degrees when that guy appeared.”

“I’ve heard that story.”

Another prisoner nodded as he interrupted their conversation.

“The federation outnumbered them 100 to 20 and a Rama warrior wearing a red battle suit wiped them all out. So he got the nickname Red Slaughterer.”

“Red Slaughterer.....”

Ark frowned at those words. He wasn’t sure why but that name gave him a disturbing feeling.

But Ark had other things to worry about than a Rama warrior running wild on other planets. The important thing was that the federation wouldn’t send any reinforcements to Beltana. In the end, the regular troops were broken by the Rama and he couldn’t extract any more Iridium. Ark had died because the Beltana regular troops were worthless.

‘Yet they even wanted some bribes.....’

He became angry once again. In the end, those guys were just strutting around trying to act elite. But right now Ark couldn’t curse them. Once he realized the circumstances again, it really was



deplorable.

“They might seem disgusting but they’re not exactly wrong. So day, only prisoners who paid a protection fee to them managed to escape from this place. If you can afford to give something to them then you will be better off. I would’ve also done that if I could. It is better than staying in a place like this for 1 year.”

“Eh? 1-1 year?”

“That’s right.”

Mellin sighed and nodded. A horrible scene appeared in his imagination at Mellin’s words.

‘I can’t stay here for 1 year.’

It would’ve been alright if he could fight on the battlefield to some degree. Yet the result was always death. 100 achievement points were taken every time he died so he was at a standstill if he gradually earned achievements.

‘If my experience increased a little bit then.....’

Galaxian’s revival system was through registering at the Fairy. Even if he earned experience on the battlefield, it would return to zero when he died. His achievements were decreased and he was the same level as before so it was a vicious circle. It was even difficult to purchase food to eat right now.

Yes, there was no way he could escape from this place.

‘Even if I don’t have to worry about food.....’

The military situation was worsening so extracting Iridium was more difficult. There was also an intense competition among the prisoners so it was hard to even obtain 1 gram of Iridium!

Anyway, it was impossible to build achievements if he was starving on the battlefield.

‘Dammit, what’s the point of my new skills? I don’t even have any chances to use it.’

Ark sighed as he looked at the skill information window. Then

something popped into Ark's head.

'Wait? Iridium is a space resource. Then perhaps.....maybe.....'

Thoughts began to revolve quickly in his head. The conclusion that he came to.....

'It is worth a try!'

Just as Ark was thinking this.

"Hmm hmm, didn't you get some space food before? I'm sorry but just one....."

Mellin studied Ark's face and spoke carefully. This was the reason Mellin kindly gave him the information. He approached in order to receive one Space Food. He was a senior prisoner on Beltana for 1 year so he couldn't get that much food. Food for prisoners were urgently required. Ark was the same as well. He had exchanged his armour in -50 degrees weather for food. Normally he wouldn't give away one food generously.

"Here it is!"

Ark threw food to Mellin before running to the supply tent. Once again, the goods spread through the supplies tent weren't just food. Various equipment and general supplies as well as food were sold there. Of course, the prisoners couldn't even afford food so there was no way they could get the other equipment. But there was something necessary for Ark.

'As expected, it is here!'

Ark's eyes brightened as he examined the supply tent and he shouted.

"That one! How much is it?"

"That.....1 kg of Iridium."

Irina looked towards the place Ark indicated and replied.

"What about this?"

Ark took off his shoes and asked. Irina frowned as he placed the shoes on the counter.

“That is only worth 300 grams of Iridium.”

‘Damn, do I have to use my last resort?’

Ark worried for a while before taking off his pants. Ark took off his top, shoes and pants so his character was almost naked. Being naked in -50 degrees weather.....

His jaw instantly trembled after he became naked in the game. However, he didn’t freeze and die thanks to the body coating!

“This is....tremble....everything....tremble.....walking!”

Ark caught his first glimmer of hope.

---

—Your body has been restored through the revival system ‘Fairy.’

The Fairy in this disputed area is only offered free of charge to the regular troops of the galactic federation. The hired soldiers will need to pay a fee to revive. However, prisoners forcibly drafted will pay with 100 achievements. In addition, the time it takes to revive will depend on the level like the other Fairies.

\* 30 minutes of playing time and 100 achievements have been consumed in order to revive.

“Heh.”

Ark laughed. A Rama scouting troop wandering the area had been discovered and the prisoner unit dispatched. Ark had died from the long distance bombing before even seeing the Rama troops.

It was natural. His pants, shoes and armour had been exchanged so Ark was naked. There was no way he could survive the bombing in such a state. The Rama’s long distance bombing exploded onto Ark’s -50 degrees frozen body. Therefore his achievements were shaved by -50 again but.....

‘I’ve already thrown away my body so -50 achievements is nothing.’

Ark wasn't interested in achievements now. He was walking around naked and gambling everything on one bet! Ark had been on the verge of getting the results he wanted when he had been summoned to the battlefield. That's right.....

"Please weigh this."

Ark walked into the supplies tent and said. Then he started pulling black ores out of his bag.

The black ore with a faint purple aura around it was Iridium. However, the Iridium Ark took out was different from the other prisoners. His Iridium wasn't a small particle like gold dust! They were 10 lumped of Iridium the size of a fist.

"8 kilograms."

"8-8 kilograms?"

The prisoners in the area gaped as they heard Irina's answer. It was difficult to even obtain 50~60 grams of Iridium from hours of searching through the ground. It was natural to react like that when seeing 8 kg.

"N-no way! How on earth? Where did such Iridium come from....."

The corners of Ark's mouth lifted as he heard the prisoners talking.

'I also thought it was impossible at first.'

It was impossible to collect several kilograms of Iridium when they were mixed with the earth like sand particles. Ark rapidly changed his mind after seeing a skill on his Nymphe.

-A new skill (Common Occupation ☆) has been learnt.

Dig (User, Active): A useful technique to dig at the ground with a shovel. Something as simple as shovelling also have their own tips. You've dug for a long time so you have discovered the knack of digging more efficiently.

Your speed at digging will increase and you can also discriminate between different sensations using the tip of the shovel.

<Digging speed increased by 30% and the chances of finding items

and minerals also increased by 30%>

It was the digging skill! In fact, Ark had forgotten he had this skill. It was because Ark couldn't see the Nympe's information window when he mastered this skill. But Ark was able to confirm the skill when he arrived at Beltana because of the galactic federation. That was the idea that popped into his head.

'The Rama and galactic federation are fighting over Beltana because it has a significant amount of Iridium. In other words, the Iridium might be buried. The prisoners had to obtain small particles of Iridium which was difficult thanks to the Rama. There might be even more pieces buried under the ground. Then it is better to dig for Iridium than wander around blindly looking for it!'

And the odds of discovering minerals increased with the Dig skill. Ark's expectation was correct and he was able to get more Iridium. The problem was that a shovel was essential to use the Dig skill. Tori have given him a shovel to dig the tunnel but that was seized when he arrived at Beltana. So he had to take it off. He took off his shoes and pants in order to exchange them for a shovel. He was cold and gave up on his defense.

"I predicted it correctly....."

Despite trembling and being so cold he felt like dying, he was forced to go out in the -50 degrees weather. It was a gamble where he gave up all his defense items and risked his life to buy a shovel! He put his life on the line and started shovelling.

Tang-!

-You have discovered Iridium!

A jackpot like message rose in front of him.

"It came! Iridium! And it is a lump of ore!"

There was a lot of ore in the ground. That's because there wasn't anyone among the prisoners with the digging skill. It was natural. This was the future with space ships flying. In this age with machines

like excavators, what type of person would use a primitive item like a shovel? Moreover, it hadn't been that long since the game started so most users were focused on raising their level. But he had spent a week digging in the ground. Obviously he would learn the digging skill! Now that he could mine Iridium, his circumstances changed by 180 degrees. The other prisoners had to search through the soil to find a sliver of Iridium.....

Papapapa! Papapapa!

[-You have discovered Iridium!]

Papapapa! Papapapa!

[-You have discovered Iridium!]

Ark crazily dug up the earth and found chunks of Iridium. He had managed to collect 8 kg of Iridium in just one day! When considering that the other prisoners gathered 50~60 grams, it was 160 times the efficiency.

'Digging is really useful!'

Indeed there are no useless skills in the game. Ark realized that truth after seeing the Iridium piled up in his bag.

'How about it? Am I different from the other prisoners now?'

Ark puffed up with a conceited expression as he looked at Irina. Well, he might seem like a pervert but he still gathered 8 kg in one day. Even the emotionless face of the robotic Irina had to change. However, unlike his expectations Irina didn't have any reaction.

"What do you want to exchange it for?"

'What? What's with this reaction? Aren't you surprised? Huh? Don't you have no choice but to be surprised? This is startling!'

Ark tried to convey that through his expression but there was no response. In the end, Ark just gave up and looked at the goods.

||

—Supplies Catalogue—

Space Food (Iridium 100 g) – Your satiety will increase by 20% when eating this.

Purified water (Iridium 100g)- When drinking with Space Food, the satiety will increase by 30%.

Equipment Repair Kit (Iridium 500g) – General equipment can be repaired.

Smoke Bomb (Iridium 1.5 kg) – A smoke screen will spread out in a 30 metre radius.

Low-level Recovery Ampoules (Iridium 5 kg) – This will restore 250 health immediately.....

He could buy 8 kg worth of items.

‘I’ve obtained kilograms of food so I don’t have to worry about food anymore.’

He could buy food at any time. Naturally the various equipment and weapons caught his eye. The prisoners had exchanged their equipment for food. Ark had also taken off his equipment. His armour was equivalent to 1.3 kg of Iridium. However, interest piled up and now he had to pay 2.5 kg to buy it back.

‘Even if I take back my equipment, there is 5.5 kg left.’

He eyed the other things he could afford.

‘Smoke bombs and recovery ampoules.....’

If he bought a few of them then it would raise his survival rate. But Ark soon shook his head.

‘No. These supplies won’t be a big help on the battlefield. If I think about the amount of achievements I have to earn in the future, they won’t be enough. I have to invest in something like this now. This is what I really need to survive!’

Ark surveyed the goods for a while and took a deep breath before

speaking.

“Please return the equipment I left behind and change the rest for food and water.”

“The remaining Iridium.....is that right?”

Irina stated with a frown. It was the first time he had seen that look on her face. Of course she would be doubtful. He wanted to exchange 5.5 kg of Iridium for food and water. That was too many to eat by himself.

“You can also reserve mileage. Don’t you want to buy them steadily and get something useful for battle instead?”

“No, change it all to food.”

Ark replied in a firm voice. Irina looked doubtful but did as he asked without questioning Ark any further. He gained 55 Space Food and Purified Water!

‘Now for the troublesome part!’

Ark headed towards the barracks holding the packed food.

Several prisoners visited him as soon as he sat down.

“That.....I’m sorry for asking.”

He didn’t even have to listen to their requests. Most of the prisoners were starving from a lack of Iridium. This scene would obviously occur after buying 55 food. In this place food was the same as gold.....

“I can guess what your request is. Please take it.”

Ark gave one Space Food and Purified Water to each prisoner. Eating those together would fill satiety to 50%. That amount was enough to recover so that they wouldn’t receive a penalty. The prisoners looked at Ark with wide eyes.

“Y-you’re just giving it?”

“You don’t like it?”



“N-no, I didn’t mean it like that.....”

“You and I have fellow soldiers suffering the same things. We are sharing our lives. It is natural to share food with fellow soldiers. If you’re hungry then visit at any time.”

“B-but.....”

“It’s okay. Aren’t we fellow soldiers?”

Ark smiled and shook their hands. The prisoners were immersed in a crucible of emotions. It was natural. They were lacking food so there was a desperate struggle for even one small piece of Iridium. Giving this much food away for free was unthinkable. Ark looked like a saviour in the eyes of the prisoners.

“W-what did you say? You said you were going to help fellow soldiers right?”

Mellin who had already received food asked. Ark gave him a condescending look and laughed.

“Bring anyone who is hungry. I can’t promise to help everyone but I’ll do everything in my power.”

“Ohh, for someone like you to be here!”

Mellin brought some more prisoners. Their bodies were so shabby it seemed like they had been starving for ages.

“It must be hard. Please take it.”

Ark distributed the food to them without asking for anything in return. That helped Ark on the battlefield.

“It’s dangerous! Ugh!”

If the other prisoners spotted damage then they wouldn’t hesitate to block the attacks. It didn’t matter if they were killed because of it! As the days passed, Ark’s name started to spread among the prisoners.

“Hey, have you heard about a guy called Ark?”

“Ark? Of course. Yesterday I received food from Ark.”

“So he’s really giving the food for free?”

“Yes, but only to people who are about to die of starvation. Anyway, quite a few people stopped dying of starvation because of Ark. And that’s not all. Ark didn’t care about self-protection and even helped me on the battlefield. Well, I still eventually died.....”

“Ha! He really is a crazy guy. Why is he doing that?”

“What? Crazy? This bastard!”

The prisoner’s warm look changed to anger.

“Don’t talk too much! Shut up, we’re prisoners so how can we distinguish between good or bad? I was really impressed. If you’re going to talk like that then don’t come to this place. Anyway, Ark said we are fellow soldiers. Fellow soldiers! Do you know what that means? I will never let you speak badly about Ark!”

It only took Ark three days to hear talk like this.

‘Huhuhu, it is going as planned.’

Ark laughed as he noticed the atmosphere among the prisoners. Ark became like an angel thanks to his venture into philanthropy. No, it was because there was nowhere overflowing with Iridium. There was a reason for it. Ark had gained 8 kg of Iridium the first time he used the digging skill.

‘I don’t need to worry about starving to death!’

Ark was glad about that and ran wild. But after some time passed, he felt rather lonely. He was definitely pleased about not having to worry about dying anymore. \When he was on Nephalim, hunting one monster was enough for several days worth of food. He was glad he didn’t have to die of starvation anymore but.....

Rejoicing in something like that by himself felt lonely.

‘Be steady Ark! Your goal is to live!’

Ark had to become the best player in Galaxian. He had to get off

Beltana in order to do this.

“Yes, that’s right. The important thing right now is to get off Beltana. The problem of living is settled for now so I have to focus all my power on that objective. Fortunately it is possible to gain recovery ampoules and equipment from here. I’ve found a way to obtain Iridium so buying them won’t be a problem. But.....’

It wasn’t a 1 on 1 battle. Ark was fighting on a battlefield filled with hundreds and thousands of soldiers. A few ampoules and equipment won’t have much effect. Especially if his level was low.

Therefore the thing Ark needed right now was colleagues! Reliable colleagues.

‘The prisoner unit is different from the other troops. The atmosphere was bloody as the prisoners fought over pieces of Iridium. In such an atmosphere, asking to be colleagues right now won’t work. Then I should make them come to me first.’

That was the reason Ark changed all the Iridium to food. Not surprisingly, the prisoners started to visit when Ark gave out the food for free.

“If you give us the steady food supply then you can join our group.”

A prisoner called Guren said this to him. In fact, the prisoner unit were actually split into 3 groups.

The first group were the prisoners who paid money to Valencia to protect them. The second group were made of high level prisoners. And the last one were the prisoners who didn’t belong in the other two groups. Guren was the leader of the first group. Although the first group had a high survival rate thanks to the protection of the regular troops, the regular troops monopolized all the loot so it was difficult to get a steady food supply.

“That’s okay.”

But Ark declined their offer

‘My survival rate will definitely increase if I join the first group. But unlike the other users, I have a conditional exemption. My position will be lower than the other users. Of course I will get a chance for

achievements. If I survive the battle then I can get 50 achievements. I would rather make a new group.'

It was better to be the head of a snake than the tail of a dragon. Even a snake would be able to eat a frog. Despite having a small head, it could still get benefits.

'And I'm going to absorb the 3rd group!'

Ark gave out the free food to the prisoners belonging to the 3rd group. Some users bribed Valencia with gold to protect them. And the 2nd group had to be a certain level. The 3rd group was where the remaining users and all the NPCs were gathered, which was why Ark picked the 3rd group.

'They are the prisoners who don't have a place to lean on. So I will buy their hearts!'

He could raise his intimacy with NPCs unlike users. It was no different when saving them from a harsh situation. His investment paid off after three days. He raised his public image with the NPCs. And little by little the effects showed.

"Ark, it is dangerous! You have to live!"

The prisoners who had helped started protecting Ark on the battlefield. The change in the NPCs spread quickly. It hadn't even been 5 days before all the NPCs were surrounding Ark on the battlefield.

"Hyung-nim, give us a chance to return the favour! We will stop the bombing!"

His title changed to Hyung-nim in no time. So Ark formed the 3rd group in the prisoner unit. Thanks to the Space Food, the prisoners became loyal bodyguards!

"Now the game is starting!"



# The 3rd Group (PART: 2)

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“Hrmm.....”

Hyun-woo looked at his appearance through the reflection in the glass. He was wearing an expensive suit and looked quite amazing. Hyun-woo's clothes matched the flashy venue. An orchestra was playing underneath a huge chandelier and people wearing formal suits and dresses were gathered around tables laid with food.

‘The game is a hell while reality is heaven.....’

His life had changed 180 degrees in 4 years. At that time, it was heaven in the game and reality was hell. Of course, the world hadn't changed. Hyun-woo's position had just changed. But Hyun-woo didn't come to this party to play around. Hyun-woo found this place unnerving. He also had no time for it considering the situation in Galaxian.

‘Damn, that Ha Myung-woo.....’

Hyun-woo sighed and scratched his head. Hyun-woo was at this party because of his job.

*-New Year's Eve donation party to help refugees overseas.*

“Director Kim has to come to this party. Director Kim is in your twenties so it will be good for the company image if you show up.”

That was the reason Ha Myung-woo sent Hyun-woo here.

‘Well I am young but.....’

The party didn't match with Hyun-woo's personality. It was an event to gather donations to help refugees abroad but they had spent a tremendous amount of money to hire a famous hotel as the venue. It was like sitting in a high place and throwing bread to someone pitiful while thinking ‘Hahaha, you should thank me!’ He would rather spend

his money buying flour and sending it himself. Hyun-woo had a reason for such values. It was his mother Park So-mi and his stepfather Gwon Hwa-rang. After his mother's body recovered from the long ago accident, she had gone overseas with Gwon Hwa-rang to help the refugees and had spent 7~8 months in places like South Africa.

'Leaving her son alone.....'

Hyun-woo's thoughts were then interrupted. He suddenly saw a woman with a familiar face. She was a woman in her twenties wearing a red dress. Hyun-woo looked doubtfully at her face.

'Eh? She somehow looks familiar?'

When he first saw the woman, her face looked really familiar. Hyun-woo was curious so he turned around and gradually approached her. He held up a cocktail and stealthily looked at her face.

'Wait? That face.....eh? I-is that Irina?'

She was the cyborg like Irina in charge of the supplies on Beltana! The woman in the red dress had a 90% synchro rate with Irina's face.

'Eek? I-it can't be? This woman is really Irina?'

He already knew that Irina was a user. But he heard the rumours that she was an aunty in her forties and never thought her appearance would be like this. She didn't even blink as she let prisoners die of starvation yet to find her helping at an event for overseas refugees.....an exclamation mark appeared in Hyun-woo's head as he stared at her.

'Wait? This might actually be a chance!'

Some people might be difficult to approach in the online game but were different in reality.

'If she really is Irina then she is an officer for the galactic federation. If we became familiar then there are several ways she could help. Well, it might be too obvious if I approach her talking about the

game.....’

He needed to pretend he didn’t know her. Hyun-woo thought like that and started to walk towards her. But before he could, a group consisting of 1 man and 2 women approached her. Hyun-woo missed the timing thanks to them.

“Hey unlucky woman, why are you showing your face here?”

“.....”

“Ha, look at that expression.”

“Yes, that attitude makes me even angrier.”

“You unlucky woman, we had to see something inferior because of you.”

“Honestly, it is worthless if you come to a place like this.”

The man and two females cornered her.

‘What is this? What is their relationship?’

Hyun-woo just stared blankly. After a brief moment, he started to get angry at the group. She was just standing there silently as the group said more and more abusive words to her. He didn’t know what their relationship was like so he didn’t feel like he should interfere. However, she wasn’t doing anything to stop it. Then the group said with cold eyes.

“Anyway, it will be gold if you go into a corner to eat rice so we won’t notice you anymore. Or just leave.”

“.....”

She still didn’t say anything.

‘Irina.....there’s no doubt she is the same person. Their characters are the same.’

Despite this situation where Hyun-woo thought she should be angry,



her face was still expressionless.

‘Anyway, this isn’t the time to talk to her.’

Hyun-woo sensed the uncomfortable atmosphere and was about to turn his body.

Suddenly the two women giggled and exchanged glances. And one of them approached her with a cocktail. She intentionally pretended to stumble and poured the contents of the cocktail onto Irina’s back. No, she tried to pour it!

“Ik! It was about to fall down.”

Hyun-woo quickly approached and helped her with a smile.

“Be careful. Won’t various people be troubled if it falls?”

“Who cares!”

The woman flared up and quickly turned around. However, there was a vague smile of satisfaction on Ark’s face. Hyun-woo aimed for this chance to speak to Irina. But stopping it was too obvious. He had been able to walk away when he saw the opportunity and grasped it. Now he had a chance to naturally talk to her.

‘It might be a little uncomfortable but.....’

Hyun-woo hadn’t intentionally produced this situation. There was no reason to be stopped by his conscience.

‘Huhuhu, won’t a conversation naturally follow now?’

“Are you alright?”

Hyun-woo laughed and turned around. However.....

“Eh?”

.....There was no one there. Hyun-woo looked around with confusion and saw her slipping away. Although he saved her from having a cocktail poured on her, Irina just rejected any chances of conversation and walked away.

‘She must be embarrassed.....’

Ark decided to think like that.

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“Hyung-nim!”

A prisoner grabbed Ark’s hand.

“This gift! I will never forget it for my entire life!”

“This gift, it is nothing.....”

“Don’t say that!”

The prisoner forcefully shook his head and said.

“I gave up on everything before meeting Hyung-nim. Going onto the battlefield when starving and then dying, I thought it was a miserable daily life that would be repeated forever. But then I met Hyung-nim. I’m not starving thanks to Hyung-nim so I’m able to avoid the bullets better. I’m going to leave this hell place thanks to Hyung-nim. Hyung-nim is my saviour!”

‘That’s right.’

Ark inwardly smirked. However, he would get more benefits from acting modest. Ark acted like he was refusing the thanks and said.

“Today’s result is because of your effort. I just gave you a small opportunity. Are we fellow buddies who have shared hardships? It is natural to help fellow soldiers and to receive their help later. You don’t need to be too thankful. No, I am the one who should be thankful. You’ve believed in me and followed me so I’m very thankful. You might not be a prisoner anymore but I hope you remember your fellow soldiers forever.”

“H-Hyung-nim.....”

Tears gathered in the eyes of the young prisoner. He wasn’t the only one. 10 other prisoners were gathered around him with red faces. The prisoners all looked at Ark with tearful expressions.

‘It took some time to come here.....’

While watching them, memories of the past few days passed through his head like a panorama.

10 days ago, Ark had been able to use the Dig skill to find kilograms of Iridium and was able to solve his food problem. However, Ark wasn't satisfied with just that.

'The most necessary things in this place are colleagues!'

Ark knew. Colleagues were the most important thing on a battlefield. Prisoners paying money in return for Valencia's protection was similar to gaining a colleague. Ark gave away free food in order to gain colleagues that would die for him on the battlefield. Even a little bit of help in a harsh environment would be impressive. Ark's sacrifice (?) was enough to impress the prisoners and they naturally flocked around him. The 1st group among the prisoners were users who offered money to the regular troops for protection. The 2nd group were relatively high level prisoners while Ark gathered all the leftovers into the 3rd group.

'But my organization is still lacking unity. Even if the 3rd group of prisoners are gathered around me, it isn't possible to call them an organization yet. The prisoners received free help so they are obliged to return the help. However, that would make it impossible to show off effective group cooperation on the battlefield. They need a shared target in order to show off any teamwork.'

Ark immediately launched a two stage plan. Stage 2 is to create 'graduates' from among the 3rd group! Thanks to Ark's support, the survival rate of the prisoners increased. They were able to build up achievements and some managed to escape from Beltana. The prisoners gathered around him were those who gained enough achievements to be pardoned.

"The prisoners who followed Hyung-nim have been pardoned!"

"We believe that Hyung-nim will help us escape from here!"

That idea formed within the prisoner's consciousness. Ark had aimed for this. He planted a shared target within the prisoners! The prisoners had gathered in order to return the favour. But that was just mere courtesy. However, it was different if they had a shared

goal. They had already become an organization and Ark could command them now. Of course, the leader of the organization was Ark!

“Although it is regretful that the number of prisoners who followed me decreased.....”

The result was a great success. Now the prisoners gathered around Ark weren't just thinking about paying him back. They were following Ark in the hope of escaping from Beltana. The change in consciousness made them into Royal Guards with a deep loyalty for Ark. However, Ark's progressing plan also brought an additional effect.

“Hyung-nim, I have something to discuss before leaving.”

These were the first graduates that Ark discharged from the Royal Guards. A prisoner called Asuran visited Ark before leaving Beltana.

“In fact, I was the boss of a bandit group in the city of Sidellin. Although I might've spent my life stealing from others, I know how to return a favour. You handed out food to trash like me and saved me from a life of hell! Oh, I will never forget it. So Hyung-nim should visit me once you leave this place. I want to pay Hyung-nim back a little bit. Please!”

Asuran grabbed Ark's hand.

<Asuran will Return the Favour>

Asuran was dispatched to the disputed planet Beltana after being arrested and you've saved him and allowed him to be pardoned. Asuran is impressed by your favour and wants to pay you back. If you visit Asuran in the city Sidellin on Istana then you will get a special reward.

Difficulty: –

‘Quest?’

Ark's eyes popped out with surprise. He never imagined that he

could get a quest from a prisoner on Beltana! But it wasn't that unusual when he thought about it. It was natural for users to get quests from NPCs. Even if they were prisoners, it was possible for them to give quests to Ark. But he thought of the prisoners as beggars and hadn't expected anything. However, there was one thing Ark hadn't considered. They were NPCs. They might be prisoners but they were different from users. They might be prisoners thrilled about food but once the prisoner identity was taken off, they were thieves, engineers, merchants etc. Since then, Ark's gaze towards the prisoners changed.

Not only could the prisoners help him on the battlefield but he could also receive rewards from the NPCs. Anyway, Ark managed to transform the prisoners into a Royal Guards organization. Therefore he needed to quickly build achievements for prisoners who would give compensation. He had to give priority to those prisoners.

'I need to understand the prisoners in order to do this.'

So Ark started to have regular conversations with the prisoners.

"I was born as the son of a poor peasant in the slums and started stealing because I was hungry....."

'I will put him on reserve for the moment.'

"I was a follower arrested after covering for the crime of the boss of my organization....."

'He will be on reserve too.'

"I was the owner of a large store. I had at least 30 employees. But money was my enemy. I became too greedy and started tax evasion. Hah, if I managed to escape from this place then I could return the favour....."

'This guy!'

He became a top priority to be pardoned. Ark rallied all his power to raise the achievements of the prisoner. It was highly likely that a compensation quest would be given. Of course, not all the compensations gave compensation as they left. However, the prisoners who didn't give quests repaid him through other methods.

“I think Hyung-nim needs this more than me.”

-Fading Steel II (Magic)

Item Type: Gun Wearer Restriction: Level 20

Attack: 15~20 Durability: 18/30

Number of Ammunition: 12

Fading Steel is an automatic pistol with excellent performance. Although the damage might be less than other pistols of the same grade, it is a reliable long range pistol beloved by pioneers. However, the light weight of the gun means there is a strong recoil and is a weakness of the gun. However, this gun is equipped with a laser scope which increases the hit ratio.

<Firing Rate +10%, Hit Rate +20%>

Some prisoners would give the weapon they were using!

“It’s not much but this technique might be useful to Hyung-nim.”

-A new skill (Common Occupation ☆☆) has been learnt.

Withdrawal (User, Active): The universe is a place where you might face any risk. Therefore the most important thing to all pioneers is survival! This survival skill manifested due to that desire.

This technique concentrates all your mental power to reduce the probability of being detected by machines. However, your body has to be concealed if you want to use this. In addition, the mental consumption is big so a break is needed after 30 minutes to reapply it.

<Probability of being detected by an enemy -50% when concealed>

Mental power consumption: 30

Some prisoners also taught skills before leaving. It was the same for

a prisoner called Milan.

“Even though it was only for a short time, I’m proud to serve under Hyung-nim. We might be separate but I will come running if Hyung-nim calls, even if I’m on the opposite side of the galaxy. And you didn’t forget the promise from yesterday? It’s a promise. Be sure to visit me once you leave Beltana.”

Milan spoke in a tearful tone and the information window appeared.

<Milan’s Proposal>

Milan is a treasure hunter in Tatuine. In exchange for your help on Beltana, he promised to find a treasure to repay you once he returns to Tatuine. If you visit Milan in Tatuine then it might be possible to receive a special reward.

Difficulty: –

A quest was registered. During the last 10 days, Ark managed to give 5 prisoners amnesty. As a result he received 3 quests, the Fading Steel II and a skill. It was amazing! The NPCs gave him quite a lot. Ark realized a natural truth of Galaxian. This was why Ark liked NPCs. They always repaid any good intentions. Of course, there were exceptions such as Tori but most NPCs stuck to this principle. This was the reason he didn’t hesitate to act nice with NPCs instead of users.

“But it is up to here.”

Ark waved goodbye to Milan who was leaving Beltana and murmured as he turned around.

Every time he helped a prisoner get pardoned, he would receive a compensation quest or item or skill. it will still jackpot even if it was over 10 days. But when reconsidering the number of prisoners, there was obviously a limit.

“At first there were 15 prisoners following me. 5 of them are pardoned.....”

Ark’s purpose in making the Royal Guards wasn’t to receive

compensation. The prisoners had transformed into an organization. And Ark's ultimate goal was to leave Beltana. However, the prisoners were the ones being pardoned. Ironically, Ark had made it harder for himself to escape Beltana.

"Now there are 10 people left! If the number decreases any more than I'll be in trouble."

A minimum of 10 people was needed for Ark's plan. But these 10 people were different from other users. They received a lot of help from Ark and also watched other prisoners being pardoned so they trusted him 100%. They were prisoners who wouldn't hesitate to die if Ark was in danger. In fact, the biggest benefit he got from the 5 of them leaving was their trust. Those 10 people absolutely believed in Ark! And that effect showed on the battlefield. Thanks to the prisoners, Ark's survival rate increased to 80%. Therefore Ark's achievements that had gone down to -200 increased to +700. His experience was also preserved and he gained 3 levels.

"If I maintain this state then I can leave in a month! I can escape in 1 month! But I shouldn't rashly use the remaining prisoners. I have to maintain their trust. If I lose them then I won't be able to gain anything. So it is important to raise my achievements and the prisoners' achievements equally."

In fact, that wasn't his only worry. Balancing Ark's achievements with the organization's was difficult. But there were other problems. The problem giving heavy stress to Ark over the past few days was.....

Ark flinched and stopped moving while returning to the barracks. Displeasure appeared on his face at the same time.

'Sheesh!'

Ark stared with dissatisfaction at the supplies tent that caught his eye. No, to be exact it was Irina's emotionless face sitting in the supplies tent. Ark was convinced that the female in the red dress that he met at the charity party was Irina. Therefore he went to find her when he first connected to Galaxian.....

"Hello."



“Did you want to exchange Iridium?”

“No, that’s not.....don’t you remember me?”

“I remember. You are the only prisoner to bring kilograms of Iridium.”

“No. I saw you outside. Yesterday during the charity party.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You don’t remember? I stopped a girl from pouring a cocktail on you.....”

“If you have no requests then please leave. I am working.”

Irina replied with an emotionless face. She even rejected his help when he saved her in reality. She was devoted to her work. Anyway, anger welled up inside him at those words.

‘Perhaps my judgement was wrong? No, that is impossible. He couldn’t stumble upon a face that similar. She is clearly that woman. Is she just pretending that she didn’t meet a beggar like me? Then I will make her recognize me!’

Since then Ark glared and applied unspoken pressure every time he came to exchange Iridium but there was zero response. He glared at Irina for 10 days but there was no response. Right now was still the same.

‘I know I met you at the charity party!’ his expression said to Irina.

And she neatly ignored him.

‘She really is terrible. Even if she is an officer of the federation, isn’t that too pretentious? Just ignoring people. The sight of that expressionless face really makes me furious.....’

Ark bit his lip while thinking.

“Hey, what is this?”

Then he heard someone’s voice from behind him. Ark automatically turned his face.

A group of soldiers were approaching behind him. The person who

spoke to Ark was Valencia of the 1st armoured platoon. Ark's face distorted at the sight. His expression said 'I hate you. Go away!' but Valencia just ignored it.

"If it isn't Ark who is working hard these days? Why is Ark-nim standing around absentmindedly in a place like this? Aha, were you watching Irina? That woman is your taste? Your heart is burning yet you're watching from a distance.....you are unexpectedly a romantic."

"It's not like that."

"No. I'm also a man. I can recognize that look when I see it. Irina, she definitely has a pretty face. Although I don't know what her real face is like. Anyway, isn't it beautiful? Love on the battlefield. How wonderful. Then Valencia-nim will help. Hey, Irina!"

Valencia smiled and waved towards the supplies tent. Ark was surprised by the sudden situation and caught Valencia's arm.

"W-what are you doing?"

"Jeez. This is Valencia-nim helping you."

Ark's reaction seemed to urge Valencia on even more and he smirked as he shouted towards Irina.

"Irina, doesn't it seem like Ark-nim is interested in you these days? It is painful to see. How about it? How about one date on the outside? Aigoo, she isn't looking. What do I do? You, doesn't it seem like you've been dumped? Aren't you feeling hurt?"

"You really....."

Ark blushed as he glared at Valencia. Valencia's expression seemed to completely reverse.

"Really? Really what? What did you say?"

Valencia pushed his face close to Ark and muttered in a low voice.

"You are really annoying. You understand? You cheeky brat, you think you can just scrape up the remains of the prisoners and run

wild? Who gave you permission?”

“I’m only doing my work.”

“Your work?”

Valencia sneered and laughed incredulously.

“Don’t play around. You seem to be misunderstanding something. It is because of us that you prisoners can live. Without us you will just drop dead. So you should be grateful. Yet you conceitedly formed your organization?”

“I don’t remember doing any harm to you?”

“The fact that you’re doing this is damaging me.”

Valencia repeated in a low voice.

“Listen carefully. Until now I’ve left you alone. But it will be different from now on. You’ve bothered me. You got that? You’ll realize what it means soon. No, you don’t know yet. Bear this in mind. This is my battlefield.”

Valencia looked at him with sharp eyes and turned around.

‘Hah, this guy really.....’

Ark sighed as Valencia walked away. Ark’s biggest annoyance was Valencia. Once again, Valencia used his position as the leader of the 1st armoured platoon to offer protection to prisoners. Valencia had also made him an offer when Ark first arrived at Beltana. But Ark had refused! And he collected prisoners until he formed the Royal Guards. Until this point, Valencia hadn’t worried about Ark. He probably thought Ark wasn’t worth worrying about. However, Ark’s and the Royal Guards’ survival rates soared. He was even able to help 5 prisoners escape from Beltana in 10 days. Valencia’s attitude changed since then.

‘Well it is natural but.....’

To be precise, Valencia’s attitude was because of the prisoners paying a protection fee to him.

Although Valencia and his group received the money, the monopolized most of the achievements. Still, the 1st prisoner group couldn't complain. Because they could still receive 50 achievements just from participating in the battle and surviving. But that changed thanks to Ark and the Royal Guards.

"What? Didn't we pay money so why are they getting more achievements?"

"Then what is the reason for paying money to the 1st armoured platoon?"

"Yes, what is the point of the 1st armoured platoon? They're just sweeping up all the achievements. We should've just joined Ark who is gathering guys."

Complaints naturally poured in. Valencia started to be angry at Ark from then on. The dispute continued on the battlefield. Valencia and the 1st armoured platoon tried to snatch the achievements from Ark and the Royal Guards and lured the Rama to them. So the elite troops interfered with them the achievements for several days.

'Those bastards.....'

Ark was the type of character to hold a grudge forever.

'I show them what it means to go against me.'

But the 1st armoured platoon were the elite troops of the federation. The Royal Guards were just organized so the elite troops are too strong for them. In addition, Ark couldn't gain any achievements with the armoured platoon stuck to them. He would definitely return the grudge. But he had to leave them alone for self-protection.

"Well, I'm not going to avoid them like I'm scared of them."

It was good for his mental health to think like this. Ark muttered an excuse as he headed towards the barracks.

Wiiii!

Suddenly the camp's sharp sirens rang out. At the same time, loudspeakers started broadcasting all over the camp.

*-Emergency! The Rama's scouting unit has advanced within 100 km of this camp!*

# Straggler

---

“It’s coming!”

A cry could be heard. The sky turned black like they were covered in rain clouds. Around 100 cylindrical metal missiles were flying with emitting smoke! It was the long distance bombing from the Rama that featured in the prisoners’ nightmares. But this was different from the first time. They managed to find a way to solve it after experiencing it many times. Ark turned and shouted.

“Hegel!”

“Yes, Hyung-nim!”

A prisoner vigorously replied. Once again, over the last 10 days Ark had gathered Iridium and mobilized prisoners to help him on the battlefield. He had investigated the prisoners’ histories and chose the ones that would be pardoned first. Ark had realized something during the personal interviews. The prisoners weren’t identical NPCs. Just like users could pick different species and had different skills, the prisoners had different skills as well. Most of them were serious but they all had one specialized skill.

‘There is a limit to how much combat skills can have an effect on a battlefield compared to fighting alone. So combat skills aren’t that different. But my organization is different. Even skills without a visible use will have a synergy effect in my organization.’

Ark had this point in the back of his mind during the personal interviews. Thanks to that, he was able to find Hegel. Hegel was a 1 metre tall alien with a grey body and black eyes from a species called ‘Grey.’ Hegel’s species was the cause of kidnapping humans from earth and experimenting on them.

Anyway, the Grey’s small frame meant they weren’t that good in combat. However, they were an advanced scientific civilization with high HQ. Therefore the Grey’s skills were aimed towards taking

advantage of their high IQ.

“Orbit Prediction Calculation!”

Hegel manipulated his Nymphe with a long finger. He raised his head and saw signs placed on several missiles.

“Hyung-nim, those ones! Those are the missiles that will harm our unit!”

This was Hegel’s skill! It was calculating the missile’s trajectory in order to predict the impact point.

But the Rama’s bombing covered the whole area where the prisoner troops were. Even if Hegel calculated the impact spot, there was no way to avoid the bombing.....

‘But my organization is different!’

“The target is three points! Mellin, Berad, Cupa, point A! Beleol, Hedro, Reben, point B! Ralph, Konsed, Kalliben, point C. Aim for those missiles and stand by!””

“Did you hear? Everybody loaded!”

The Royal Guards kneeled down and loaded their shotguns. There were continuous ringing sounds as the missiles approached the 100 metre mark. A shout emerged from Ark’s mouth.

“Fire!”

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

9 guns fired simultaneously. 3 prisoners aimed for 1 missile! This was the method Ark came up with to take care of the bombing. Hegel would read the orbit of the missile while the Royal Guards would intercept them!

Ching-! Ching-! Ching-! Ching-! Pepepepeng!

Sparks appeared over the warhead and they exploded in mid-air. Beleol at point B had the best sniper skills followed by Kalliben at point C. While the B and C missiles were taken care of, the A missile only exploded when it was 30 metres away. They only intercepted a

few missiles but some risk had disappeared. However the prisoners still received damage from the Rama's bombing. Not many soldiers on the battlefield actually died from the missiles falling on them. Most of them died because they were caught in the explosion. The same thing applied to Beltana's battlefield.

100 missiles were concentrated on one area. This meant the damage of 100 explosions built up.

Those caught in the centre of the explosion couldn't breathe and melted. It was the reason Ark didn't participate in the missile interception! Anyway, Ark had no shooting talent even at short range so he would've been no help. But Ark was still affected because he was on the battlefield. It was -50 degree weather yet he was still sweating.....

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

Dig! Over the last 10 days of gaining 7~8 kg per day, Ark's Dig skill had already reached intermediate. When Ark dug at frozen ground, the shovel easily parted through it like it was soft tofu. He dug at the ground like a motor was attached to the shovel and a big hole was instantly created. The Royal Guards are intercepted all 3 missiles.

"All the warheads are destroyed!"

"That's it. Enter the trench and lower your body!"

Ark shouting while jumping into the pit. The 10 prisoners also fell into the hole and lay flat on the ground!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

They waited as a violent roar shook the atmosphere. 100 missiles exploded and fire and fragments covered the area. Even heavy armour clad soldiers died instantly from the blasts! However, the blast was the strongest higher up and lost strength as it got lower. The fire and impact only affected the higher places. That was the reason Ark had created the pit. It was only 50 cm into the ground but it still negated most of the effects of the explosion. In other words, if he countered the missiles that would fall directly on the trench then he didn't have to worry about anything. This was the secret to Ark and the Royal Guard's survival rate.



“Cough! Cough!”

The explosion swept past them. Ark crawled out from the dust that covered the trench and looked around. Bodies strewn around in the mud caught his eye. Ark could use Dig to make find Iridium and even make trenches to protect the prisoners following him from the bombs. But Beltana was a planet with -50 degrees weather! It was impossible for users who didn't have the Dig skill or a shovel. The shovel might break down but he could waste several Iridium repairing it. It was possible to counter the missiles and stop most of the damage.

‘Well I still lost 15% health.....’

But he couldn't be compared to the torn rags on the ground. However, he couldn't afford to sigh with relief.

‘Now the real battle will begin!’

“Is everybody okay?”

“Yes, some are a little injured but we're all safe and sound.”

Mellin crept out of the trenches with several members and replied.

“Okay, everybody in their battle formations!”

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

At the same time the ground started shaking. The area was filled with dust from the explosions so he couldn't see beyond in front of him but Ark could understand the identity of the noise. It was the Rama's second attack after the long distance bombing. The dust split apart and they appeared.

“Carack!”

The Carack were the Rama's biological weapon with the form of a mantis! The Carack rushed forward in a herd. Hundreds of Carack approached the prisoners who were in disarray from the explosions. The injured prisoners were hit by the Carack's weapons and torn to pieces.

“Waaahhh!”

“S-save me! Waaah!”

Screams and blood swirled through the dust. In fact, most of the prisoners were killed by the Carack rather than the bombing.

“Pay attention! Don’t worry about other units!”

Ark yelled towards the members of the Royal Guards.

“The biggest enemy on the battlefield is fear. No matter how strong the person is and the weapons they have, they won’t win if they’re fearful. So calm your heart. And trust in me. And believe in your colleagues. We are one. If that trust is unbreakable then we’ll be able to leave here.”

“Ohhhhhh! Hyung-nim!”

“Attack!”

Ark shouted. At the same time, a roaring sound emitted from the muzzles of the Royal Guards. It exploded across a short distance and 3 Carack collapsed.

‘It was worth all that digging.’

Ark laughed as the Carack were wrapped in flames. Whether it was the future or medieval times, the most important thing on the battlefield was teamwork. The background of Galaxian might be different from his previous games but Ark knew better than anyone about conducting thousands of soldiers. The reason he created the Royal Guards and pardoned 5 prisoners was to build up achievements for himself. Thanks to Ark’s efforts, the Royal Guards’ teamwork was incomparable to other troops. Ark turned his eyes elsewhere.

‘Teamwork is important but that isn’t everything. Other things are also necessary. In particular, the level of the Royal Guards is lower than other units. But level isn’t something I can change in a short period of time. In the end, I have to focus on long range attacks to increase the survival rate of the members. Then the best way to

raise the combat power is to upgrade their guns.....'

If he used the supplies tent then he was able to obtain better guns. However, the cheapest guns considering the levels of the Royal Guards required at least a ton of Iridium. It was impossible for Ark to obtain that much Iridium. So Ark turned his eyes towards bullets. The damage of medieval weapons changed depending on the bow and arrows. It was the same for Galaxian despite it being set in the future. The damage of the gun varied depending on the bullet. There were dozens of different types of ammunition.....

-Fire Bullet I

Attack: Firearm damage +5 (Additional Fire Attribute)

A bullet developed by Laius, one of the 4 big companies. A flammable substance developed by Laius is loaded within the warhead and will emit a strong flame with impact. The flames won't affect androids and shields but will have a significant effect on biomedical tissue. There is also a chance the flames will deal continuous fire damage.

<3% chance of continuous fire damage. 50 additional damage will be given every 1 minute>

The bullet Ark selected was Fire Bullet! He chose this based on the Carack's biological body. Apart from the Iridium exchanged for food, he turned the rest into Fire Bullets. He could confirm the results of his blood and sweat in front of him.....

Peng! Peng! Hwarururu!

The fired bullets shaved away the health of the Carack. Furthermore, the soaring flames turned them into ripe meat.

-Achievement + 5.

-Achievement + 5.....

The wonderful messages appeared in front of Ark. He received

some experience and achievements from any opponents that the Royal Guards knocked down. It was only 1 point but a bonus was applied since Ark was the leader and added up to 5 points! That was how Ark managed to gain +700 achievements during 10 days.

‘But I can’t be satisfied with just eating little by little.’

And there was a limit to how many Caracks could be stopped with shooting. There were hundreds of Carack. Not all of them were attacking the Royal Guards but there were still dozens of Carack. They couldn’t use the Fire Bullets anymore because the other prisoners would now be hit. It was the same for the Royal Guards now as well.

Karararara! Kararararak!

The Carack pressed forward with the human wave tactics and attacked the Royal Guards. It was time for Ark who had no talent in shooting to go forward!

“Shut up you bastards! I won’t let you make noises anymore! Sonic Sword!”

Ark threw his body towards the Carack and swung his weapon. He used Sonic Sword! A light flashed from the blade and blue fluid fell from the body of the Carack. A vacuum was created by the blade surpassing the speed limit. However, that wasn’t the real value of the Sonic Sword.

Kiiiiiii-! Pepeng-!

There was a shock wave the moment the blade broke through the speed of sound. The shock wave passed back dozens of Carack. The effect of Sonic Sword pushed them back 5 metres. This effect was more attractive than damage when dealing with a large number of enemies.

“Now! Berad! Ralph!”

Two Royal Guards ran towards the Carack. Berad was wielding an hammer with a strange engine attached. On the other hand, Ralph was holding a dagger. They were the two in the Royal Guards with

the best head-to-head skills.

“Yes Hyung-nim! Ohhhhh! Smash!”

Berad twisted his hammer and exhaust fumes emerged from the engine attached to the hammer. The hammer received an explosive acceleration and attacked the enemy! When Berad brought down the accelerated hammer, the head of a Carack immediately became like a dented can. Meanwhile Ralph’s dagger shook as it hit the Carack.

“Screw Blade!”

The dagger rotated in a spiral and pierced the neck of the Carack. The head and neck of the Carack was crushed. Meanwhile Ark was approaching the Carack he hit with Sonic Sword.

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok!

Ark placed the muzzle to the Carack and pulled it three times.

“Now the fatal blow. Set Bullets Shooting!”

Pepeng-!

There was a sound like a cannon firing. The effect was also like a cannon. A huge hole appeared in the Carack’s head! This was Ark’s 2nd battle skill, where bullets were gathered and fired. However, the damage was 2.5 times. It was shot from close range. However, the weak point was the recoil so the hit rate lowered. But Ark’s marksmanship was for close combat! The hit rate didn’t matter to him. Even if he couldn’t do any damage with the bullets, he could just use evasive movements while shooting. But the good point was that the attack did 2.5 times the damage!

-Headshot!

<You have inflicted a serious blow and the Carack will receive additional 150% damage>

It was a jackpot when there was a headshot! There was an additional 2.5 times damage added to the 150%. Of course, the hit rate had decreased so there weren’t that many chances of a

headshot.

Chiiiiik.....

The combination of the Sonic Sword and Set Bullets Shooting made the Carack melt like water.

[-Achievement + 15.]

His achievements rose from killing it directly.

‘These guys were so annoying when I first came to the battlefield.....’

The Carack were a biological weapon. Although there were an incredible high number of them, they were only level 15. They were difficult to deal with in a group but easy to gain achievements against when the Carack were alone.

Karararara! Kararararak!

“Sonic Sword!”

Ark used Sonic Sword and pushed back the Carack.

“Smash!”

“Screw Blade!”

Berad and Ralph also used their hammer and dagger!

Suksak suksak!

Together they defeated the Carack one by one. Of course, the remaining Royal Guard members weren’t just watching.

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

While Ark, Berad and Ralph were taking care of the Carack, the other 8 members were using the Fire Bullets. The Caracks’ health fell with every attack while the Royal Guard members created a defensive wall! This was the secret to Ark’s survival rate.

[-Achievement + 15.]

-Achievement + 5.
-Achievement + 5.....

His achievements were able to steadily build up! There were trial and errors in the beginning but now these tactics had been completely perfected. The bodies of the Carack piled up around Ark and the Royal Guards after 5 minutes.

‘If the battle progresses like this then I should be able to gather up a considerable number of achievements.....’

Just as Ark was thinking this.

Syu syu syu syu syu. Pepeng-!

A signal bullet shot up over the battlefield and emitted a blue light. There was a sandstorm on the hill to the rear and 100 soldiers appeared. Unlike the prisoners, they were the federation’s regular troops armed with advance technology.

“T-they finally came!”

“The regular troops are moving! Now I’m saved!”

The prisoners let out a burst of joy. But Ark just sighed and bit his lip.

‘Dammit, only up to here today.....’

In fact, Ark didn’t consider the help of the regular troops to be bad. Ark was the leader of the Royal Guards but he was also a part of the prisoner unit. There were only 11 people, including Ark, so they wouldn’t be able to hold up against the hundreds of Carack without the help of the prisoners. However, more than half of them had already been killed by the bombs and the Carack.

Naturally the burden on the remaining prisoners would grow. It was the same for Ark and the Royal Guards. There was a surplus of prisoners at the beginning for the Carack to attack but it became more difficult for the Royals Guards to form a defensive wall as time went on. Therefore the line of defense was pushed back little by little. Ark and the Royal Guards wouldn’t last long in that situation.

However, that changed if the regular soldiers got involved. The

regular troops would lighten his burden.

‘But that only applies to other prisoners.’

The reason was simple.

‘That sneaky bastard, he’s a soldier.....’

Ark bit his lip as he glared at Valencia. Valencia received bribes from other prisoners but he had a significant amount of influence among the regular soldiers. It was because he was the leader of the 1st armoured platoon that he could receive the bribes from the prisoners. Valencia utilized that influence to step on Ark.

“Pedro!”

Valencia surveyed the battlefield and called to a soldier. Then the soldier called Pedro led 10 soldiers and advanced towards Ark’s troops. It wasn’t to help them.

“Sonic Sword!”

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

Ark and the Royal Guards were attacking the Carack.

“9 o’clock! Attack the Carack that the prisoners are fighting!”

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

The soldiers immediately started firing after receiving Pedro’s command. The regular troops received the full support of the galactic federation. The weapons couldn’t be compared to those of the prisoners. They had machine guns as well as RPG’s (rocket launchers). Their firepower with the addition of the special bullets were a lot more powerful than the Royal Guards! The Caracks were instantly turned into chunks of blood once the regular soldiers attacked. Ark and the Royal Guards had worked hard to shave away their health.

‘Dammit, again!’

Ark glared at Pedro and his cronies. Their purpose wasn’t to fight. Valencia’s goal was to interfere with Ark and the Royal



Guards. That was the duty given to Pedro. And Pedro had executed this mission for the last few days. If Ark's unit moved forward then they would follow! They followed Ark like a leech and stole the lives of the Carack that Ark worked hard to decrease. But they didn't strike right away. Pedro waited until Ark and the Royal Guards had wasted the expensive Fire Bullets before attacking and stealing the achievements.

'If it was that much then I can endure it.....'

They even provoked dozens of Carack and drove them towards Ark's unit. They couldn't kill Ark directly so they tried to use the Caracks to kill them! Quite a few Royal Guards died because of that.

But there was no way to deal with it.

"Hyung-nim, what now?"

"It can't be helped. They won't act once we withdraw to the rear."

Gaining achievements was difficult with Pedro's unit interfering. If they tried to endure against the Carack then it would just become more difficult. Moreover, the Rama would soon send in their regular troops. So it was better to retreat early and secure their safety.

"Retreat to the rear while guarding against the Carack!"

Ark led the Royal Guards and retreated. Meanwhile, the battle between the federation and the Rama was becoming more violent.

"Num! Kara! Marakana! Okara! Akarana!"

The Rama's regular soldiers moved forward and assaulted the federation soldiers. The Rama was a species users were able to choose that weren't significantly different from humans. The Rama had dark skin and pointy ears similar to a Dark Elf in medieval times.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang! Pepeng! Pepepepeng!

A confused fight between the Rama and the federation started. Soldiers wearing heavy armour and superalloy swords crashed into each other. There was a colourful exchange of light as

the futuristic firearms and psychic energies attacked each other. It was like a scene from a fantasy SF game!

“.....As expected.”

Ark muttered while watching the battlefield. It had been 10 minutes since the battle earnestly started and things were increasingly tilting towards the side of the Rama.

‘It is natural. If the core of the 1st armoured platoon is helping the prisoners who paid them or interfering with others then of course they couldn’t fight properly.’

And that wasn’t the only reason. Just like Mellin said a few days ago, the galactic federation wouldn’t throw a huge amount of funds and troops to this planet because they were losing to the Rama. Therefore they placed Beltana as a low priority planet and focused on others. On the other hand, the Rama received a lot of support from their main planet! So there was a difference in firepower, biological weapons and androids. In the end, there were dozens of casualties and the regular troops crumbled.

*-Retreat! Return to the defense base in area B-3. All troops return to the Memeod!*

The Commander’s voice could be heard from the Nymphe. Anyway, Ark and his troops had retreated from the battlefield a long time ago.

“That’s it. There have been orders for retreat. Leave the field and return to the Memeod!”

Ark turned his body without hesitation and headed toward the Memeod. Peratul’s voice could be heard as he approached the Memeod.

*-Prisoner units hurry! The Memeod will be leaving in 30 seconds!*

<p><b>-Time before the Memeod leaves: 29, 28, 27 seconds.....</b></p>
---

The Nymphe displayed the remaining time. If he couldn’t board the Memeod within the time limit then he would be left on the battlefield. The battlefield was infested with Carack and Rama warriors.

However, there was no reason to hurry. Ark's unit was a distance away but they could easily board the Memeod within 30 seconds.

'This is as far as we could get today.'

Ark thought as he led the Royal Guards towards the Memeod.

Pepepepeng, pepepepeng, pepepeng!

Suddenly, dozens of smoke bombs exploded in front of them.

"What, what the? This? Why are there smoke bombs here.....?"

Ark burst out with confusion and looked around. Then there was a mechanical sound and something hit his side. Ark was thrown several metres away from the impact. It wasn't just Ark. Something collided with all of the Royal Guards and they were thrown to the ground.

"This is....."

"Aigoo. I didn't see you there. I'm sorry?"

Valencia's sarcastic voice was heard among the smoke. Ark immediately saw Valencia and the 1st armoured platoon when he flinched and turned around.

"Shouldn't you get up?"

"You bastard!"

"It serves you right for going against me."

Valencia smirked and jumped onto the Memeod.

-Time before the Memeod leaves: 1, 0 second.....
--

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

The door closed and the wheels of the Memeod started rotating. At the same time, it quickly crossed the ice.

"H-Hyung-nim!"

Ralph stared at Ark with a pale white face. The Memeod

transporting the troops were gone. Ark and the Royal Guards were stranded.

‘That bastard Valencia, doing such a thing.....’

Flames seemed to appear around his whole body as he imagined Valencia’s laughing face. But it quickly blew out thanks to the -50 degrees temperature.

‘The distance to the B-3 retreat spot is 50 km away.....’

Ark looked at the ice covered wilderness. It was a virtual reality game so the players could use all their senses to feel. It was the same for the cold. The body coating helped them adapt to the harsh environment but they still felt the chill. They had to march 50 km in that cold. However, Ark had more to worry about than a 50 km march.

*–There are some guys remaining! Kill them!”*

Ka ka ka ka, ka ka ka ka, ka ka ka ka!

The smoke slowly cleared and the Carack and Rama saw them. A Rama warrior led dozens of Carack and rushed towards Ark’s unit. He cursed at Valencia.

“Dammit! Go!”

---

Hwiiii-!

A snow storm raged in the sky. The -50 degrees weather seemed to scrape against his skin. However, Ark already couldn’t feel the chill.

‘Dammit.....’

Ark bit his lip and sighed. It had been 1 hour since they had fallen into Valencia’s trap and missed the Memeod. Thus Ark had been engaged in a desperate struggle for 1 hour. Dozens of Carack and a Rama warrior were pursuing Ark’s unit. But it wasn’t easy to shake off the pursuit if the Rama warrior. The Rama had already defeated the federation!

Karararara! Karararak!

There were Carack and Rama everywhere he escaped to. It was a desperate situation but Ark wasn't giving up. If he died then all the experience he earned would be lost. Moreover, his achievements would decrease by 100. However, there was a reason Ark didn't give up.

'Valencia!'

Valencia was a scoundrel bullying the users! If he died like this then Valencia would win. Ark couldn't endure it.

'I have to live and return! I will definitely live and make him regret it!'

Ark held up so far thanks to that one resolution. Naturally the process wasn't easy.

"Hyung-nim, there are a bunch of them! They've blocked all routes of escape!"

Every time he was caught by a Rama warrior, a group of Carack would block them from retreating. The Royal Guards bought time while he escaped! Escape! Escape! But every time some Royal Guards died and now there was only Ark and Berad left. Only two people were remaining.

'We can't last much longer.....'

Ark looked around desperately. This place was dozens of kilometres away from the federation base. Of course, Ark didn't know the geography. The GPS on the Nymphe indicated that the B-3 area was in a straight line.....

'For there is be a crevasse in this place of all things!'

A 10 metres crevasse was blocking the path in front of him. And the Rama and Carack were pursuing them. They were literally chased to the edge of a cliff. Valencia's face appeared in his mind as he saw the gaping crevasse. At the same time, a deep anger swelled in his heart.

'No! I can't give up yet!'

Ark gripped his weapon and raised his head.

‘This is the worst situation. But I still can’t give up. 10 Carack and 1 Rama warrior had chased me up to here. The problem isn’t the Carack but the Rama warrior!’

The Rama warrior was a regular soldier. He met the federation’s regular soldiers so he knew their average level was over 40. On the other hand, Ark had just reached level 30. Furthermore, his equipment was incomparable to that of the Rama warrior.

‘But if I can knock the Rama warrior down.....’

He could take care of the remaining level 15 Caracks. If he combined forces with Berad then he could somehow handle them. Of course, that was only talk unless he knocked down the Rama warrior. If the Rama and the Carack attacked at the same time then it was game over. No, there was no guarantee that he could even reach area B-3 if he escaped from here. The Rama had already seized the area.

‘But I have to try!’

Ark shook his head and gripped the dagger. He whispered as the Rama warrior gradually narrowed the distance.

“Berad, can you distract the Carack?”

“Hyung-nim, are you perhaps.....?”

“If you take care of the Carack then I will deal with the Rama warrior.”

“Rama warrior.....Hyung-nim can deal with it alone?”

“There’s no choice.”

That’s right. Berad nodded and clenched the hammer with both hands. Berad actually had a higher level than Ark. However, Berad admitted that Ark had better combat skills.

“I understand. I’ll stop the Carack even if I’m torn apart!”

The Rama warrior laughed and shouted.

*-Kukukuku, it is up to here. Carack, kill them!*

The 10 Carack yelled and rushed forward at the Rama warrior's order. At the same time, Berad brought his hammer down against the ground.

"Oscillation!"

Kwaaaaaaaah-! Pepeng-!

The propulsion device on the hammer shook and cracks appeared in the ice. The Carack stumbled from the shock and Berad raised his hammer before shouting.

"Hyung-nim, now!"

Then Ark shot forward like an arrow towards the Rama warrior. A black light separated the darkness and flew towards the Rama warrior's neck.

"Sonic Sword!"

Jjang!

*-Heh, a prisoner of the federation dares attack me?*

The Rama warrior laughed and blocked Ark's dagger with his shield. A deep blue sword also appeared from the Rama warrior's right side. It was a beam sword Ark hadn't seen yet! Ark hurriedly opened his shield at the sight of the beam sword. However, there was the sound of breaking glass as the shield opened. The shield has shattered with one blow!

'No matter how weak the shield is.....'

To have his shield shatter in one blow from the beam sword meant that the Rama warrior was tougher than expected! The Rama warrior laughed after the shield broke and approached.

*-Is that the extent of your skills?*

The Rama warrior wielded his beam sword and began to pressure Ark. The tremendous power of the beam sword broke the shield in one blow! Even a slight blow of the shield would deal a critical

hit! Ark rolled across the floor and avoided the sword. However, he soon realized that he had been pushed in front of the crevasse. Ark's face darkened as he saw the crevasse.

"D-damn!"

*–Your tricks end here. Energy blast!*

The Rama warrior's beam sword expanded explosively. The beam sword reached the size of 2 metres!

'.....Now!'

Ark's eyes brightened and he rushed towards the Rama warrior. He placed the Fading Steel against the Rama's shoulder and pulled the trigger.

Tang-!

The Rama warrior's shoulder exploded and he was pushed back.

*-Ugh! This bastard!*

The Rama warrior clutched his shoulder stepped back. But anger lit up his eyes and he swung the sword. Ark smiled pleasantly and rotated his body around the Rama warrior. And Ark kicked his back!

*-Heok!*

A cry of confusion emerged from the Rama warrior's mouth. Ark had been pushed back against the crevasse by the Rama warrior. Now they had changed positions and the Rama warrior was against the crevasse. The kick in the back caused him to slip into the crevasse. Falling into the crevasse meant death!

'Success!'

This was what Ark had aimed for. When he checked through the Infrared Scope, the Rama warrior was level 50. Ark's probability of winning was only 10%. Even if he somehow defeated the Rama warrior, there was no guarantee that Berad could stop the 10 Carack. Therefore Ark's plan from the beginning had been to push the Rama warrior into the crevasse. All his preparations was for this



move! He waited until the Rama warrior was distracted and pushed him into the crevasse.

‘That’s it. This is an icy ground. Once pushed then it will be difficult to recover. Now that he has fallen into the crevasse.....’

Ark was sure of his victory.

*-Impertinent brat! Armour armament!*

A flash of light appeared around the Rama warrior’s body. At the same time, the space distorted and armour like objects appeared. The armour moved like the skin of an insect and formed around the Rama warrior’s body. The insect like armour around the Rama warrior was similar to the Protoss in StarCraft. It was the alternate form of the Rama warrior that Ark had never seen before.

‘T-that is the battle suit of the Rama!’

Armour armament meant the Rama could use the battle suits immediately! The federation and Rama’s battle suits had different mechanical forms and initiation.

*–I won’t be tricked by your plan!*

Kwajijijiji! Uddeok!

The Rama warrior’s armoured fist struck down on the ice and he stopped moving. It seemed like Ark’s plan had ended in failure.....

“Not yet! Armour armament!”

The same thing happened to Ark’s body. Armour appeared from the distorted space and wrapped around his body.

*-W-what? A federation prisoner with armour armament.....something like that.....!*

The Rama warrior cried out with surprise. Ark shot forward like an arrow while encased in armour and crashed into the Rama warrior. The force caused the Rama warrior to fall into the crevasse.

Ark confirmed that the Rama warrior disappeared into the crevasse and turned around.

“Pant pant, it is a success. Now.....”

Snap!

Then Ark’s ankle was grabbed by the Rama warrior’s hand. Ark’s foot slipped on the ice as it was pulled. And endless darkness spread out underneath his body! Ark had fallen into the crevasse. A moment of carelessness had caused Ark to fall into the crevasse. He heard a popping sound as his ankle kept being pulled.

–*You!*

The Rama warrior had grabbed his ankle. The Rama warrior glared and reached out his left hand holding the beam sword.

*-I will kill you with my own hands!*

“Don’t make me laugh! If I die then you’ll die!”

Ark pointed the Fading Steel downwards and pulled the trigger. The Rama warrior was surprised and quickly activated his shield. However.....

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok!

Bullets shot out from the Fading Steel. They bounced off the Rama warrior’s shield.

*-Kukuku, you stupid fellow. You wasted all the ammunition in your gun. You’re pathetic. Let’s see if my sword or you reloading your gun will be faster!*

The Rama warrior swung his beam sword again. No, he tried to swing it!

“You said I have no more bullets left?”

Ark smiled and pulled the trigger another time.

“Set Bullets Shooting!”

At that moment, 3 bullets emerged from the muzzle! It perfectly hit the face of the off guard Rama warrior. But Ark couldn’t see the Rama warrior’s confused face. The three bullets had exploded in the

Rama warrior's face.

Pepepeng-!

*-Kuaaaaak!*

The Rama warrior's head bent like a bow. The hand that was grabbing Ark's ankle let go from the impact. The Rama warrior grabbed his face with both hands and spun like a pinwheel as he fell down. The Rama warrior had separated from Ark! However it was too late. Ark was already falling down the crevasse.

'I've already fallen down hundreds of metres. If I hit the ground at this height and speed.....'

100% death! Unconditional death.

'But I can reduce the fall speed!'

Ark murmured and raised his head. Ark manipulated his Nymphé and a shovel sprung out of the bag.

'I can slow down the speed using this!'

Bakak-!

Ark used all his strength and plugged his shovel into the ice wall. And a sharp pain split his shoulder. It was natural. The shovel was stuck inside the ice wall so he all the weight was concentrated on his shoulder. An average person would've dislocated their shoulder. The reason it was possible was because Ark hadn't neglected to exercise.....but the reason was different.

Jijik! Jijijjik! Jijijji!

The armour covering his shoulder rose like a muscle. Everything was due to the battle suit covering Ark. The battle suit was a technology of the future that increased the endurance of the body! Ark was also using the battle suit designed by the Rama.....

'My speed has decreased a little bit! It is possible for me shoulder to hold out!'

.....Just as he was thinking that.

Papapapa! Papapapa! Papapapa!

Ark confirmed the effect and wielded his shovel like crazy. His fall speed would decrease a little bit every time it hit the ice wall. Once his speed decreased to a certain point, he got drive the shovel into the ice wall even more powerfully. Ark grabbed the shovel with both hands.

“That’s it!”

Snap! Kakakakaka!

The shovel tore down the ice. A long scar dozens of metres was created in the ice wall....uddeok! His body finally stopped.

“Pant pant pant, I-I’ve stopped.”

Ark dangled from the shovel and gasped with a pale white face. He had been frantically shovelling after falling off the cliff. It felt like he had done a strenuous workout as sweat dripped down his body.

“If I was a little late.....”

His eyes dropped to the bottom and he felt a chill again. There was only 10 metres until the ground.

If he had delayed even a few more seconds then he would be smashed like the Rama warrior. He looked at the smashed body of the Rama warrior on the ground. If Ark was even a little slower then he would be in the same position.

“It is fortunate that I’m alive.”

But he couldn’t feel pleased when looking at the distance he fell. It had taken him 3~4 minutes to stop falling down the crevasse. When considering his rate of descent, he had fallen at least a few kilometres. In other words, he needed to climb up a few kilometres in order to escape the crevasse.

However, his worries didn’t continued for long.

“Eh?”

Ark looked around the area restlessly. He saw a shining object next

to the body of the Rama warrior.

The identity of the object was a piece of armour! The Rama warrior had dropped an item. He stopped worrying about escaping the crevasse the moment he saw the items. A level 50 warrior had dropped an item!

“Isn’t this a windfall?”

Ark cheered and jumped to the ground.

Jang-! Jajajajak-!

There was a sharp sound and cracks spread on the ground. Ark took a deep breath and looked around at the unexpected situation.

‘What, what the? This floor....is it ice?’

Ark had jumped down to a ground made of ice. Luckily the ice seemed fairly thick. However, the ice had weakened thanks to the Rama warrior’s fall and cracks started to spread once Ark stood on it. Once the cracks happened, the ground started to shake.

‘If this continues.....’

The cracks would slowly spread across the ice floor. He couldn’t fathom what was underneath the ice. Ark had to live no matter what. If he didn’t live then everything would be wasted. However.....however.....

‘I can’t! I can’t give it up!’

Ark swallowed his saliva and stared at the shiny armour in front of him. It was an item a level 50 Rama warrior had dropped. How could he give it up when it was right in front of him?

‘Yes, there is no guarantee the ice will break even if I grab the item. The chances of getting out of the crevasse is 20%. Right now dying is a common part of my history. It isn’t an abrupt thing. But that item will be mine!’

So far Ark had died 7 times on Beltana! He had died so frequently that Ark was desensitized to the sensation. Therefore he became a slave to his greed and carefully advanced towards the item. He

spent 10 minutes narrowing the distance little by little. Ark looked at a big crack with anxiety and fear before grabbing the item.

“I got it!”

Harkenion Armour (Magic)

Item type: Light Armour (Coat)

Wearer Restriction: Level 40 (Body Coating Required)

Defense: 45    Durability: 5/50

A armour made from a metal called Harkenion mined from the planet Atempor. Harkenion is a peculiar material with a unique hardness like rubber and is a widely used metal in armour. However, excellent space resources invites trouble. A few years ago, the Rama raided Atempor for its Harkenion as formed it into a colony. Since then the Rama has monopolized Harkenion and produced many special armour with it.

<Agility +10, Damage by a melee weapon is reduced by 10%>

“A level 40 magic armour!”

Ark cheered with joy.

Jjang!

A sound was heard from under his feet. The cracks spread through the icy ground like spider webs and it was barely hanging on. Ark’s weight had increased after picking up the armour. He had to carefully maintain his balance on the broken ice.

“Hik! N-no! Before it is too late.....”

Ark hurriedly turned around. Then it happened.

Jajang! Jajajajang! Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The icy ground split apart and sunk.

“Heok! Eh? Eh eh eh? Eh eh eh eh? Waaahhhhhhhh!”

He fell and his feet touched the ground. The place underneath the ice wasn't as deep as he thought.

Ark was sighing with relief when his foot slipped and he started sliding down at a huge speed. There was a steep slope underneath the ice! He was slipping down with no end in sight. Ark hurriedly packed the armour and took out his shovel. He used the same method like when he fell into the crevasse and slowed down. Then something quickly appeared in front of him. It was a pillar of ice as sharp as a blade! If he collided with the ice pillar then he would be cut in half.

"Dammit!"

The shovel wouldn't work. Ark hurriedly put away the shovel and took out the Fading Steel.

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

He blindly fired the Fire Bullets and shot the ice pillars, scattering it. However, there wasn't just one ice pillar. When one was broken, it was followed by another and another! Ark hurriedly reloaded the Fading Steel and kept on firing as he slid down. How long was he sliding? He had reloaded 13 times. After he had shot the Fire Bullets many times, an underground square unfolded in front of him.

Daekururu, teolsseok!

Ark rolled 100 metres in the square before he could finally stop. Ark's face slammed into the ice and he flinched after he raised his head.

"Pant pant, I survived once again....what is this place?"

Ark swept away the ice fragments and looked around. It was a huge underground cave with giant icicles hanging from the ceiling. First he had fallen into the crevasses and then he had slid down a steep slope. He didn't know how deeply he had fallen. Now he had to determine the distance from the federation base.

"GPS!"

[-The GPS doesn't work normally in this area.]

He have fallen several kilometres into a deep crevasse. He was too deep underground so the GPS didn't work.

"Damn, does that mean I just have to wander around?"

Ark sighed and mumbled. Suddenly a new message appeared from the Nymphé.

[-You have received a feeble signal from a nearby structure.]

A compass appeared on the Nymphé and the direction was indicated.

"An unknown signal? Then something is here? Why in a place like this....."

Ark worried about it for a while. It might be a signal for help from someone unidentified but there was no indication if it would be friendly or not. However this was a game. He never expected that a signal would be discovered in a place like this but it was a game so he couldn't ignore it. Something popping up like this could be a jackpot.

'I need to confirm what the signal is!'

Ark looked at the compass and ran across the underground cave. The underground cave was more spacious and complicated than he thought. The Nymphé also only indicated the direction so he would often be blocked by the terrain. But he wandered around for a few hours and the terrain gradually became familiar. Therefore he slowly got closer to the signal. The path suddenly lengthened and opened up.

"W-what is going on?"

++ Ruins of an Ancient Alien Civilization ++

You've stumbled upon an identified signal underneath Beltana. You've followed the signal and found the remains of an ancient civilization. The purpose of the ruins is unknown.

Whenever a pioneer discovers an unknown civilization or area, they can gain adventure points. Adventure points can be used for various



purposes.

\* Adventure Points +100

An information window appeared from the Nymph.

# Pyramid

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“Hmmm.”

Ark tilted his head to one side. He had fallen several kilometres down a crevasse and was in a huge underground square. Ark had followed the signal from the Nymphe for several hours before finally arriving at the destination. Then information about the ruins of an ancient civilization surfaced on the Nymphe.

“But no matter how I look at it.....”

Ark was standing in front of a huge stone building. It was a building dozens of metres high with bricks stacked up. Ark had seen this building before. No, anybody on earth would know that building. An Egyptian pyramid! Ark had found a pyramid in the underground square. One of Earth’s pyramids had been discovered on Beltana that was hundreds of light years away. The question ‘why?’ came to his mind.

‘This is something impossible.’

He was a man so this was a mystery that Ark was crazy about. He had often watched documentaries talking about the mystery tied to the pyramids. The pyramids were built thousands of years ago where the technology made it impossible to build the pyramids. So many people thought the pyramids were a creation of an alien civilization. He had just thought of it as a funny story.

“Galaxian is a game set in the future where aliens exist. If aliens like the Charenjok and the Grey could visit Earth then building a pyramid wouldn’t be a problem.”

Ark organized his thoughts. The game had contingencies set for everything. There was a reason the architecture of the building was in the form of a pyramid.

“The pyramid is the tomb of an Egyptian King. I don’t know why a

signal is coming from this place but if it is built for the same purpose as Earth's pyramids then it should contain a high ranking alien king. And if the alien pyramids have the same customs.....”

The customs of the ancient Egyptians! The King's burial goods was left with him. That was the reason most modern archaeologists wanted to investigate the pyramids. 90% of the academic or history research were excuses. The real purpose was to steal the burial goods left in the pyramids.

‘There might also be burial goods hidden here!’

Ark was sensitive to the presence of gold. This place was still unknown. In other words, no one had robbed this pyramid yet. He could hopefully monopolize the goods!

‘Life is really ironic.’

A thrill of excitement surged inside him. He had fallen into Valencia's trap and was chased by the Rama before falling into the crevasse. But who would've expected to find something like this thousands of metres underground? A huge treasure might be hidden in the pyramid! If Valencia knew this fact then he would probably regret it. Endorphins flowed in Ark as he imagined it.

“Kekeke! I'll sweep them all!”

Ark started to investigate the pyramid. But despite examining every corner of the pyramid for a few hours, he couldn't find a way to enter.

“What? Is this just a model that resembles the shape of a pyramid?”

He started to feel uneasy. But Ark soon shook his head.

‘No. This is clearly not just a model. My Nymphé had received a signal from this structure. There is no doubt that something is hidden inside the pyramid. But I can't find the door.....’

Then an ‘!’ appeared in his head.

“Wait? Why do I need to go through the door?”

Ark was interested in the pyramid because of the signal. In other words, he wanted to rob it. There was no need to politely go through the door! And Ark possessed a way to enter without a door.

“It is this!”

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

Ark lifted his shovel. It was the shovel that saved Ark from despair on Beltana! Once again, Ark had learnt the Dig skill while trying to rob the museum. He originally used it to earn food but now it was a tremendous skill!

“Okay, shall I get started?”

Ark spat in his hand and grabbed the shovel. He started to show off the intermediate Dig skill.

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

Every time the shovel moved, a huge part of the ground was dug up. The -50 frozen solid ground and rocks wasn't a problem for Ark. No, what problem would stand in the way of Ark's dream of a jackpot? Ark was determined to enter even if blisters appeared on his hand and didn't stop shovelling.

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

It also wasn't difficult to determine the direction to dig. He received the signal from inside the pyramid. This meant there was a signal generator inside. So he could just follow the direction of the signal indicated on the Nymphe! Ironically, the signal had become like a compass to a tomb raider.

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

He spent 2 days frantically digging at the ground!

“Here! The signal is coming from above here!”

Ark stopped shovelling and looked at his Nymphe.

-The direction of the signal is coming from 2 metres (↑) .
--

The compass that had been firmly fixed until now was finally pointing upwards.

“It is only 2 metres away! Right above me!”

Ark cheered with delight and dug at the ceiling with his shovel. He didn't care even if a heap of earth fell on his face. The only thing that revolved in Ark's head was the treasure sleeping inside the pyramid! What did a little dirt matter as long as he could get the treasure?

Tang-!

Then he heard the sound of a shovel hitting stone. Rocks had interrupted him a few times before.

These were flat rocks! There was no doubt that they were the paving stones from the floor of the pyramid. Ark immediately dug up the soil around the stone. Once he got rid of the surrounding dirt and pushed at the stone, it immediately went up. He lifted the paving stones and climbed up.....

“G-gold!”

Ark's mouth gaped open. Ark had climbed into a room where the walls, floors and ceiling were sparkling with gold. But disappointment appeared on Ark's face after a moment. It was shining with gold but it was just the room. It was gold paint applied instead of real gold.

“Damn. Making me so excited. Why is gold paint applied to the walls? Huh? This is?”

Ark frowned and turned around. A chair that looked like a throne was placed on the opposite side of the room. It was gold just like the interior of the room and a mummy was sitting on the throne. However Ark wasn't interested in the dead body. There were two items placed on a table in front of the dead body. One was a type of long sword with complicated patterns carved on it and the other was a small pyramid.

“This is it! It is impossible for there to be nothing!”

Ark's face brightened. The items were entombed in a pyramid! Perhaps they were items the mummy had used. It was an

item that an alien king or aristocrat had probably used. In fact, the sword had a silver blade with a pistol grip stuck in the sword hilt. He didn't know the purpose of the small pyramid but just the sword was worth it.

"Even if that is a magic item.....!"

Ark started salivating and took one step forward. Then he stepped on a pattern on the ground and a humming voice was heard.

*-Trespassers!*

"Eh? What, what the?"

*-You have disturbed this refuge! You will be cursed by Anubis, the guardian of the dead!*

A bright light appeared around the dead body. Ark reflexively closed his eyes.

"Huk! What is this? Where is this? Mummy? Item?"

He had only closed his eyes for 1 second. Yet this place didn't have the room of gold, the mummy or the items? The room he was in was around 10 metres. Instead of walls of gold, bizarre murals full of people in the afterlife were drawn and 4 statues of Anubis were placed in each corner of the room.

"What is this....."

Ark was flustered as he looked around. Then the room was dyed in a red colour.

Ujik! Ujik! Ujik! Ujik!

There was also the sound of stone moving. Ark winced and turned his head.

"N-no way.....that stone....."

Powder fell down as the stone statues of Anubis in the corner started moving. The statues moved like they were waking from a sleep and turned towards Ark. And they brandished a long iron

bar. He had been teleported into a large room where the stones started moving. He didn't know what was going on but one thing was obvious.

'If I continue staring blankly then I will die!'

Ark ducked and rolled his body.

Kung-!

The iron rod caused a pit as it slammed against the wall. Ark rolled across to the wall on the other side and stared at the Anubis.

'Yes, I roughly know what is happening. The mummy in the room I entered is clearly the owner of the pyramid. And as expected, there are burial goods hidden there. But there was something I hadn't considered. Traps were installed in the pyramid!'

Earth's pyramids also had a history of various burial goods being robbed by a number of tomb raiders. And kings had predicted those things for thousands of years. Therefore they created numerous traps when building the pyramid. Wouldn't that also be the same for a pyramid created by an alien civilization?

'It would be strange if there were no traps. But were they playing a trick by sending a distress signal in order to lure people into the traps? What is this? No, why is the mummy emitting a distress signal?'

The context didn't fit! His attempt to stealthily sneak in and steal the burial goods had failed.....

'Anyway, I've confirmed that items are hidden in the pyramid. They appeared to be ownerless so couldn't I just take them? There is still a chance. I just need to destroy the traps and I'll be returned to the gold room!'

"Let's take care of these dogs!"

Ark pulled out his Fading Steel and dagger. He avoided the iron bar that continuously hit the ground and pulled the trigger. He neared the Anubis, placed the muzzle on the knee and pulled the trigger.

“Take this! Set Bullets Shooting!”

Pepepeng-!

The Anubis stumbled and kneeled. Ark stepped on the knee, jumped up 5 metres and swung his dagger downwards.

“Sonic Sword!”

The shockwave hit the Anubis’ throat. The Anubis seemed perplexed by Ark’s quick shooting and swung its iron bar recklessly. However, Ark wasn’t blindly attacking. Ark stepped on the Anubis’ shoulder, jumped behind it and shot the back of the head.

-Headshot!

150% additional damage will be given!

The Anubis fell down as it was shot in the back of the head.

‘Heh, this is the god of the afterlife? The name is worth nothing.’

Ark stared at Anubis with a confident expression. However, there wasn’t just 1 Anubis. There were 4! It was possible to deal with 1 statue like that but it was more difficult when the 3 other Anubis ran up to him swinging their iron bar. That wasn’t the only difficult part.

‘Damn, is there no place to escape?’

The room he teleported into was only 10 metres large. The 4 huge stone statues swung their iron bars and not even Ark’s body trained by taekwondo allowed him to avoid all the iron bars.

Snap!

In the end, an iron bar struck his side.

-You have received a blow by a blunt instrument.

<The light armour is vulnerable to blunt attacks and you have received the ‘Push’ effect>



One side of his ribs crumbled from the pain and his health was sucked out. But the most troublesome thing was the Push effect. He was hit by a heavy iron bar and flew back 3~4 metres. He was thrown into a corner and 3 iron bars headed towards him. Ark quickly used evasive action but one bar still hit his shoulder. He lost 20% health in an instant. It was 10% every hit. If he was hit 10 times then he would die.

‘Dammit, one Anubis. No, it wouldn’t be difficult if there were two of them.....but it is difficult to avoid 4 iron bars swung at the same time in this space. It can’t be helped. I wanted to save this a little more but I will regret it if I die. I can’t allow my health to be decreased even more. I have to use my maximum firepower to reduce their number!’

Ark contemplated for a moment before raising his head and shouting.

“Armour armament!”

A flash of light appeared from Ark’s body. At the same time, the space distorted and armour like objects appeared. The armour looked like the skin of an insect and moved around Ark’s body like it was alive. The insect like armour changed forms like the Protoss in StarCraft. It was the battle suit that the Rama warrior used!

‘It was worth all that trouble sneaking into the museum!’

Ark’s body became two times larger thanks to the thick armour and helmet. This was the identity of the armour icon next to the Backup-1 and Backup-2 folders on his Nympe.

#### -Battle Suit

It isn’t an exaggeration to say there have been countless risks since the universe opened up. As the pioneers explore a large number of planets in the galaxy, there are unforeseen dangers difficult to predict. In order to combat these dangers, some species have developed a body coating to raise the power of their bodies to the limit. Another answer is the developing of the robots that envelop the body like a battle suit. By combining machine and humans, they

are able to overcome the limits of both and exercise the best combat skills.

The battle suit of the Rama has evolved differently from those of the Space Alliance (alliance of the galactic federation and 3rd alien union). While the federation's suit focused on scientific engineering, the Rama focused on biological engineering and developed a battle suit that could transform like the ancient life form called Drone. The Rama's battle suit is a system which uses the ancient properties of these creatures to summon the battle suit. It is convenient for storage and movement and several special features are also available. However, the mechanical properties are inferior to the battle suits of the Alliance and the transformation also has its disadvantages.

While the Space Alliance and the Rama both activate their battle suits through the Nymphe, the OS of the Nymphes are different so they can't use their opponents battle suits.

-Hyper Drone Lv1

Item Type: Battle Suit (Rama Type)

The initial version of the Rama's battle suit that was used by a famous warrior a long time ago. The function is less efficient compared to the latest models of the battle suit. But it was made in the early days so there is a lot of focus on growth.

The Rama's battle suit runs on an energy called mana so once it is stored in an alternative dimension, it will automatically recover 10% mana every hour. Once stored, the battle suit can't be summoned again until the mana is 100%.

<All stats +30%>

\* Maximum Usage Time: 30 minutes

Ark was confused by the unexpected information window. He was confused about the 'Rama's Battle Suit' part.

'Then the hexagonal object attacked to the Rama statue.....'

It was the battle suit that the Rama warrior had been wearing when fighting against the federation!

That was why the hexagonal object had disappeared after Ark touched it. The Rama's battle suit was kept in another dimension and the user had to call for it. Once Ark touched it, the battle suit was registered as his and it moved to the other dimension. However, there was still an unanswered question.

'What the? Didn't it say the OS was different so the Rama battle suit can't be used? Then how did I manage to register the Rama's battle suit?'

Moreover, his Nymphe had been broken at that time. Yet the battle suit still registered as soon as he touched it. That wasn't the only strange thing. Ark learned after coming to Beltana that the federation's OS was completely different from the Rama's so it didn't translate the Rama's language.

"Num! Kara! Marakana! Okara! Akarana!"

.....That was what he heard. However, Ark's Nymphe even translate the language of the Rama.

'There's only one way to unravel this phenomenon. Perhaps my Nymphe is operating abnormally after it received the computer virus and was restored.'

However, it was clear that it wasn't behaving normally. But Ark didn't protest to the galactic federation. A feature had been added rather than something being taken away. Besides, he received a battle suit for free so there was no reason to question it closely. That was the reason Ark couldn't use the battle suit on the battlefield. It was a Rama battle suit so he couldn't use it. Wouldn't the chances of being hit by friendly fire increase? He was also worried about the battle suit being seized but.....anyway!

"There is nobody here!"

Ark laughed. The Anubis then ran up with their iron bars. Ark lowered his upper body, avoided the attacks and rushed to an Anubis. The battle suit increase his stats by 30%. It was the same

for his battle suit. Thick armour hung around his body and Ark passed through the iron bars like they were water. He reached the front Anubis in an instant and kicked out. It was a razor like front kick!

Tong-!

The Anubis wobbled and retreated. Other users wouldn't understand but this was the most satisfactory part about the battle suit for Ark. Galaxian was a place filled with androids and monsters with superior physical endurance compared to humans. Therefore if he connected with their bodies using martial arts then the effect was 0. It was often the human receiving the damage. However, it changed once the battle suit became like an armour around him. His armour body gave him enormous physical endurance. The Anubis made of stone crumbled with his kick. Rather than increasing his stats, the battle suit gave Ark the ability to fight in close combat! It was an armour that made it possible to show Ark's combat style. Therefore the battle suit increased his stats by 30% but the actual combat power was a lot more! When the weapons of the future are added.....

"I can show who I am!"

Ark approached the off balance Anubis. He avoided the continuously plunging iron bars and shot the Anubis in the knee. Then he jumped up and kicked it in the face before shooting again. Afterwards he jumped off its shoulder and used Sonic Sword! It was the combination of Sword-Hand Combat and Close Marksmanship!

Peng! Peng! Peng! Pepepeng!

The attacks connected without any opening for the Anubis to counterattack and it collapsed. Ark took care of one stone statue in an instant and turned around with a confident expression.

"Now, who is next?"

The atmosphere was excellent so Ark was smug.

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

Then he heard the sound of rocks moving from behind him. Ark looked back and stiffened.

The Anubis that he had turned into a pile of stone was starting to combine again? The Anubis was reassembled and it once again had 100% health!

“W-what is this?” R-revival? Then it is immortal?”

Even if he killed it then it would revive. Did that mean there was no possibility of winning in the first place? Ark’s motivated cooled in an instant. However, Ark shook his head and rushed to the Anubis.

“No, there is no such thing! A monster that can’t be killed? It is impossible!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

He continued his rapid fire offensive! The combination of bullets, Sonic Sword and kicks made the Anubis collapse again. However, it was soon restored again. That wasn’t all. Ark’s attacks were too excessive and he didn’t avoid all the damage, causing his health to decrease to 50%. But the Anubis revived immediately and didn’t give him any time to recover!

‘There is no way. No monsters are impossible to kill. There is clearly something there.’

Ark gave up on attacking and just concentrated on evasion. He was only starting Galaxian but Ark possessed enormous experience from his 4 years of New World. He had seen hundreds of thousands of different types of monsters. There were quite a few enemies that made him think it wasn’t possible to win.

‘Yes, that’s right. Invincible.....a monster like that doesn’t exist in the game. If it feels invincible that means I haven’t found the way to defeat it yet. It is obvious. There must be a way to defeat it. What is it? Something with the ability to resurrect the dead.....’

In the fantasy world, there was an undead magician called the Lich with the ability to resurrect things. Unless he destroyed the thing resurrecting the Anubis, it would keep on reviving.

‘But there isn’t anything here.....’

Ark looked around the place.

Snap!

Once again an iron rod hit his side. Ark screamed from the shock and flew towards the opposite wall.

It was the wall right next to another Anubis!

‘T-this!’

Ark expected a follow up attack and hurriedly raised his shield. Then something strange happened. No, it was the fact that nothing happened. Despite Ark being thrown next to another Anubis, it didn’t react and just stood there absent-mindedly.

‘What? This bastard, what is he doing? It is like I’m invisible.....wait?’

Then Ark had a brilliant idea.

‘Am I really unseen?’

Ark frowned and looked at the Anubis. It was a monster with the body of a human and the head of a dog. Ark hadn’t considered it but the Anubis was a statue. There was a carved eye but there was no guarantee it was a real eye. But it had seen and attacked Ark properly just then. No, he felt like it had seen him.

‘It was able to detect me. Yet it couldn’t see me once I arrived at this wall. Yes, this means they weren’t watching me through their eyes but something else.....there is only one place in the room that can’t see my position right now!’

It could see the whole room except for the place where Ark currently was. Ark’s wall was in a blind spot. Ark came to that conclusion and began to search the other walls. After a while.....

‘Oh my god!’

Ark felt like he had been hit in the back of the head.

It was the mural that covered the room that he was standing next to. The mural had thousands of people lined up in an ‘┐’ and ‘└’

shape with the eyes continuously moving. The mural was moving as well as the eyeballs. There was no doubt about it. The solution came to him once he discovered the cause!

‘That figure. If that figure is adjusting the Anubis’ position then the answer is easy. They will stop once I smash the mural. But I only have half of my health left. I will be attacked by the Anubis the moment I start hitting the mural. I need to destroy it in a short period of time!’

And a skill naturally appeared in his head. It was the skill with the strongest damage that Ark currently had! That skill was.....

“18 Barrage!”

Ark turned towards the mural on the wall and shouted. Then steam appeared from the shoulders portion of his battle suit and his fists started moving at an incredible pace. It was the 18 Barrage skill attached to his battle suit!

-Hyper Drone Exclusive Skill-

18 Barrage (User, Active): A basic skill of the early stage Rama battle suits. 18 Barrage focuses the mana of the battle suit on the shoulders and arms for a special move. The destructive power is unimaginable but you must be in close range with the enemy and you can't stop once you start attacking.

In addition, the skill uses all the remaining mana so the battle suit will automatically be turned off.

<Damage is proportional to the remaining mana>

It was the skill attached to his battle suit Hyper Drone. In fact, Ark had never used the 18 Barrage skill before. It wasn't possible to use the battle suit and try it out before falling into the crevasse. However, it did have disadvantages. Once the attack started it couldn't be stopped. Furthermore, he had to give up the 30% stats since the remaining mana was poured into the skill.

Naturally the damage would appear. No, he couldn't turn back even if the damage didn't appear.

His battle suit would disappear the moment the attack stopped.

'If this doesn't connect then I'll die!'

He firmed up his determination and used 18 Barrage!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

At the same time, both arms moved like a motor was attached to it. Pits appeared in the mural wall and stone flew with every hit. One hit! Two hits! Three hits! Four.....once he had attacked at least 10 times, the area seemed to be covered in a fog of powdered stone. Finally his fist hit the wall 18 times.

Cheolkong! Syu syu syu syu!

The battle suit disappeared with the last hit to the wall. At the same time, Ark's body returned to its smaller, original state.

"Dammit!"

A moan emerged from Ark's mouth. He had beat the wall so much that it was difficult to check if the eyeball had been crushed. Yet the Anubis were still standing up. It meant that the Anubis wasn't controlled by the mural. His unbeatable attack had failed! Ark was sentenced to death.

"Is it going to end here.....?"

Ark sat back with a blank expression.

Jajang! Jajang! Jajang! Jajang!

All of a sudden cracks started to appear on the bodies of the Anubis. The cracks spread and the Anubis turned into sand.

**[-Your level has risen!]**

The message window flashed in front of Ark.

"I-I did it! The Anubis died!"

Ark exclaimed with a thrilled look. He had risked his life and earned experience!



Dudududu! Dudududu!

Once the Anubis turned into stone, exits were created on all 4 walls. Ark realized he had passed the final stage as he saw the exit. Furthermore, he had gained 1 level. He had remained for a long time on level 31 and he had finally reached level 32. That wasn't the only thing. An ore had appeared in the pile of sand.

-You have discovered information about the ore through Metallurgy.

Zaliman Ore

A very rare ore that contains mana. The Zaliman ore is found on a very special planet where mana is found in the environment. The Rama processes the ore and created products using mana.

\* Able to be sold in stores or processed with artisans.

"Zaliman ore!"

Ark had seen the Zaliman ore displayed in stores in Nephalim. Just a fist sized amount of ore would go for 2~3 gold! Yet he was able to find two pieces of Zaliman ore in the pile of sand.

"This isn't a trap but a jackpot hunting ground."

Ark's mouth gaped open like a frog. He raised his level and gained 2 expensive ore. It was the first time since he started Galaxian that he had gained so much in a short period of time.

"The gold room will always be here so I can take my time and explore. There is no reason to rush. No, I don't need to hurry. If I find a room with more Anubis then I can gain experience and rewards. Anyway, I already know the way to defeat the Anubis so I can search every corner of the pyramid!"

Ark's purpose changed at that moment. He could sweep up all the traps containing the Anubis before returning to the gold room. He couldn't leave a good hunting ground containing experience and loot like this!

"Point me to more dog heads!"

Ark jumped into the passage with eyes shining with gold. Ark had forgotten everything except for experience and loot.

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Hwiiiiii-!

A snow storm raged on Beltana for several days. Although snow was considered a romantic atmosphere in most people's eyes but Beltana was different. The freezing cold turn the rain and snow into ice. Therefore it was like small kernels of ice formed around their eyes. The ice grains and storm cause a sharp pain. However the galactic federation camp was thankful for it. The storm on Beltana meant none of the communication equipment could work. Therefore neither the federation or the Rama could move their troops. There was a tentative cease fire due to the weather. The federation were on a losing streak so they were thankful for the reprieve. The federation troops could relax for a bit.

"He didn't come today as well?"

An old man sighed and shook his head. The other prisoners gathered around sighed with a melancholy look. The old man was Mellin and the other prisoners were the members of the Royal Guards. They had been left before because of Valencia and gathered around the Fairy after dying and resurrecting. They were waiting for the captain Ark to join them. However, Ark didn't revive. The next day and the next day.....

"10 days have passed."

Mellin murmured with a stiff expression. Galaxian had planets where daytime could last for several months. Therefore the concept of time was unified and 24 hours in reality was the same as 24 hours for the NPCs. Ark had actually not resurrected for 10 days.

"People often revive late but 10 days is strange. Berad, did Ark really die in battle?"

"Yes, it is certain."

Berad who was with Ark until the end nodded.

“There was a persistent Rama warrior chasing us and he fell into the crevasse along with it. It was in order to save me. But I soon died because of the Carack.....”

Berad looked troubled and bit his lip. It was all Berad’s misunderstanding. Berad thought Ark chose to commit suicide with the Rama warrior in order to save Berad’s life. It was the distortion of history by the witness and now the prisoners believed it as well.

“Ugh! Hyung-nim!”

“Hyung-nim sacrificed his body for us.....”

“There is no one else like Hyung-nim in the whole universe.”

The loyalty of the Royal Guards increased even more. Mellin who was in charge at the moment soothed the other members.

“Calm down. Now isn’t the time to be mired in your feelings. If Berad’s testimony is true then there is no doubt that Ark was killed. Yet Ark didn’t revive for 10 days so there might be a problem with that we don’t know about. We need to figure out what is going on. This time we must help Ark instead.”

“But.....”

Ralph sighed and opened his mouth.

“You’re still here?”

He heard someone’s voice from behind him. The Royal Guards turned around and saw the 1st armoured platoon approaching.

“Those guys again!”

Ralph hissed and took a step forward. Then Mellin blocked him and shook his head.

Ark and the Royal Guards had been left behind due to the interference of Valencia and the 1st armoured platoon. Of course, the Royal Guards were prisoners while the 1st armoured platoon were elite guards. It was regretful but they had to endure it.

“Do you want me to tell you why Ark hasn’t resurrected?”

Valencia laughed and said.

“It is because of me.”

“What?”

“He had realized it. What it means to defy me on Beltana. Do you understand? Ark won’t revive. It’s not possible. He realized it will take a few years to escape from here. So now you guys can stop dreaming. Ark isn’t coming back. You were deserted.”

“Shut up!”

Hegel shouted angrily. Hegel had tears in his big black eyes as he continued.

“Hyung-nim isn’t afraid of you! Hyung-nim is more wonderful than you! Hyung-nim won’t abandon us no matter what situation it is! There is no way! Hyung-nim won’t leave us alone! It’s not possible!”

“It’s not possible?”

Valencia raised his eyebrow and took one step closer.

“How dare someone from the Grey species talk to me like that?”

“You.....I-I.....”

Hegel immediately moved backwards with fear as Valencia got closer. Mellin and the other Royal Guards lined up behind Hegel and glared at Valencia.

“We also have the same idea. Hyung-nim isn’t the type to be scared of you. We won’t tolerate any bad words about him!”

“You won’t tolerate it? Hoh, how frightening. Do you want to try it?”

Valencia narrowed his eyes at the Royal Guards. He lifted his hand and the 1st armoured platoon approached. There were 10 Royal Guards. Meanwhile the 1st armoured platoon had 30 people.

The numbers were against them. When considering the level and equipment, it was like a fight between a dog and a tiger. However, the Royal Guards didn’t back down from the pressure of the 1st armoured platoon. Just as the atmosphere between the two groups

was reaching its peak.

“It is against the rules for allies to fight against each other.”

A voice was heard from a distance. The voice came from Irina who was watching from the supplies tent. Valencia looked at Irina before shrugging.

“I guess it ends here today.”

Valencia stared at Mellin and laughed.

“You guys are prisoners.....yes, I think it will be fun to annoy people like you. The snow storm is clearing. Ark isn't returning. Things will become much more difficult for you. Now, let's go.”

“Dammit!”

The Royal Guards glared at Valencia's back. However, Valencia's words were true. Valencia and the 1st armoured platoon are the federation's elite troops. If they made up their mind to disturb the Royal Guards then they would have no future. They had hope after they met Ark but if he didn't return then they would return to their dismal situation from before. But there was a problem more urgent than that at the moment.

Kkurururu.

The stomachs of the Royal Guards growled. Ark hadn't returned for 10 days so they were starving again.

“Hyung-nim, please come back soon!”

“Come back home!”

The Royal Guards stared at the Fairy with desperation.

# Pharaoh's Legacy

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While the Royal Guards were starving.

“18 Barrage!”

Ark approached the eyeball mural and shouted. At the same time, steam emerged from the shoulders of his battle suit. Both arms moved at 300 kilometres an hour like engines were attached to it.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The rapid fire fists hit the wall! Stone powder flew up every time his fist struck the wall. The surrounding area became hazy from the powder.

Roaaaaar!

The approaching Anubis crumbled and turned into sand.

-The Hyper Drone has been exhausted.

<Hyper Drone will be recalled to its dimension and it can't be summoned for another 10 hours>

The battle suit wrapped around Ark's body was taken apart and disappeared into the other dimension.

“Phew, this time it was taken care of with the battle suit.”

Ark attached a small octopus to his forehead and muttered.

Bbok! Bbok! Bbok! Bbok!

-You have recovered 1 health.

-You have recovered 1 health.....

While the Charenjok token was healing the damage sustained in battle, he walked towards the 4 piles of sand. It was the sand piles

made of Anubis. 3 lights were shining within the piles of sand. It was the Zaliman ore worth 2~3 gold. Out of the 4 Anubis, 3 of them had dropped Zaliman ores. But Ark didn't enjoy the sight at all. No, anger surged at the sight instead.

"This isn't the first time....."

Ark sighed at the sight of the Zaliman ore. Of course, there was a reason for it. It had been ten days since Ark first entered the gold room and was transported by the trap. Ark had been puzzled the first time but his feelings soon changed. The experience and loot was beyond expectations! The idea of returning to the base was completely wiped from his mind. No, this was the place where Ark could gain the most experience and loot compared to R-14, Nephalim and Beltana. Besides, the pyramid was a hunting ground that Ark could monopolize!

'Lord! Please let this room continue.....!'

He said a prayer like that when looking at the 4 exits to the room. It felt like God was listening to Ark's prayer. He could choose any of the 4 exits and after walking along a short passage, he would arrive at exactly the same room. At first he thought he had returned to the original spot but the door closed and the Anubis statues started moving. And 4 Anubis threatened him with the iron bars!

"Yes!"

Ark cheered with joy.

'Looking at the structure, there should be a lot more rooms like this!'

If there were many rooms then the experience and loot would be better. Of course, the Anubis weren't that easy to deal with. The wall mural containing the eye controlling the Anubis wasn't always at the same place. Every time he entered a room, he had to avoid the Anubis and look for the mural. He had to fight against the Anubis while looking for a small eye. It was like looking for a hidden picture while sprinting.

'It would be better if every wall was clean.....'

The murals were hundreds of years old. Some of them had so much dirt stuck to them that they were invisible. However, there was an easy way to solve that problem.

“Facilities Maintenance!”

Suk suk! Ssak ssak! Suk suk! Ssak ssak!

It was the Facilities Maintenance skill that he learnt after cleaning dozens of kilometres of pipes on R-14! Ark took out a dust cloth from Cheksun’s Toolbox and searched for the picture while cleaning. It was a scene where the fearsome Anubis were swinging their iron rods while Ark wiped the wall with a rag.....anyway, he managed to find the murals. However it didn’t solve all his problems. If he used the special move of the battle suit, 18 Barrage then he could shatter it instantly. But 18 Barrage was a technique that used all the mana of the battle suit. Once the mana was used up then the battle suit was recalled and it couldn’t be used for 10 hours while charging. Yet he couldn’t wait 10 hours every day to start a new battle.

“Set Bullets Shooting! Sonic Sword!”

In the end, he had no choice but to settle it the old fashioned way. He had to break the mural with his gun and dagger but it was more difficult. It shattered with one blow from the battle suit but the gun and dagger didn’t do proper damage to it. The Anubis also didn’t just watch him.

Thump, thump, thump, thump! Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Naturally they attacked him with the iron bars. He had to clean the mural, find the target and damage the mural while avoiding the Anubis’ attacks. However.....Ark wasn’t that annoyed.

[-Your level has risen!]

[-You have acquired the <Zaliman Ore>!]

There was no reason to be annoyed. He received experience and loot at the end of each battle!

“Hahahaha! Amazing! Amazing! The heavens must be helping me!”



Ark ran around the room and fired his gun and swung his sword like crazy. The experience came rushing in and the Zaliman ores piled up. So Ark was happy while the Royal Guards were starving. It was a very happy time.....

“10 days!”

He had been in the pyramid 10 days. And Ark had received sufficient compensation during those 10 days.

Character Information Window			
<b>Name</b>	Ark (R-02788)	<b>Level</b>	43
<b>Species</b>	Human	<b>Occupation</b>	Pioneer
<b>Crime</b>	3,500	<b>Adventure</b>	100
<b>Health</b>	800 (+15)	<b>Mental Power</b>	450
<b>Strength</b>	105 (+3)	<b>Agility</b>	155
<b>Stamina</b>	155 (+3)	<b>Wisdom</b>	15
<b>Intelligence</b>	85	<b>Luck</b>	15
* Title: Cleaning Foreman (Agility + 3)			
* Body Coating: Prisoner			
+ The Prisoner coating is limited to the region of Beltana.			
+ Your body information will belong to the galactic federation after receiving the Prisoner coating.			
+ You are unable to receive any other body coating until the Prisoner coating is removed.			

Level 43! He was level 31 when he entered the pyramid and he had gained 12 levels in 10 days.

It was similar to when he hunted on R-14 without any breaks. That wasn't all. One ore cost 2~3 gold and he gained 2~3 Zaliman ores every time he cleared a room to the extent that his bag was full.

“That's the problem!”

The memories caused anger to surge in him again. The problem was that he reached level 43 and his bag was full of Zaliman ores. Once again, experience was relative to the level. A level 10 user could gain a lot of experience from hunting level 15 monsters. But once it went beyond 5 levels, a penalty was applied instead. Ark was able to get a lot of experience in the beginning. The Anubis were level 35. On the other hand, Ark was level 31 at the time so he had received bonus experience. Currently Ark was level 43. He was 8 levels

higher than the Anubis so he received almost no experience anymore. The pyramid wasn't an attractive hunting ground anymore after 10 days. However, another problem was the cause of Ark's despair.

"Ugh! I just have to look at it!"

Ark felt like crying as he stared at the shiny ore. The Zaliman ore was worth 2~3 gold. He was the type to collect the ores even if a missile was flying towards him. But now he couldn't pick it up anymore. This was due to the message window that surfaced two days ago.

||-There is no more space in your bag!||

It was the message that caused shock and fear inside Ark! There was no more space in his bag so he couldn't eat the 2 gold ore anymore. Thus Ark felt like his heart was being cut out every time he had to leave an ore behind. It was to the extent that the Zaliman ore appeared in his dreams! It was the reason Ark felt anger at the sight of the 3 ores.

"Ugh! I would prefer it if they didn't drop at all. Or if it wasn't visible. Why does it have to be shiny? Dammit, if this continues then I won't be able to leave until I die!"

It wasn't a joke. He really couldn't leave unless he died. Ark thought about it.

"I don't need to hunt here anymore! I need to escape the pyramid as soon as possible!"

He reached that conclusion two days ago. But Ark was dramatically mistaken. Ark hadn't wanted to enter the original room. And he didn't want to leave immediately. Ark had forgotten because of the experience and loot but he had fallen into a trap.

'Now I know why it is a trap.'

Ark began to realize the truly fearful part about this trap.

'The experience and loot is the real trap. If he died then it was

possible to leave the pyramid. But he hadn't registered at the Fairy so all the experience he gained would be lost. The thought of all the experience he earned over the last ten days flying away was enough to make him crazy. Thus he was forced to abandon the ore. Yes, the trap wasn't to kill the user. Users! The trap was designed to either cheat or kill the user! How frightening! The pyramid's trap is really frightening! This is the Pharaoh's curse!

Ark couldn't just give up everything he earned in the last 10 days. Really.....the pyramid's curse is too scary.

"Anyway!"

Ark didn't want to die because of the pyramid's curse. So two days ago he started to devise ways to exit the pyramid.

"This is still a game. There must be a way to leave after falling into the trap. There must be a way to escape from the trap hidden somewhere. The easiest way is to move along one route. If I move along one wall then I should come upon the exit."

Therefore Ark continued moving in one direction. The pyramid was around 200 metres in diameter when he looked at it from outside. When looking at the size of the room and length of the passages, he should go through 15 rooms before reaching the exit. Despite passing through dozens of rooms, he didn't find anything.

"It doesn't make sense. Why.....?"

Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku! Ku ku ku ku!

There was a roar and the space seemed to shake. It wasn't the first time that happened. Occasionally the place would shake. It was okay when he was trying to get experience and loot but he felt like it was unusual now that he was trying to find an exit.

'Does this shaking have something to do with the structure of the pyramid?'

Ark contemplated for a moment before a thought rose in his head. It was a movie called Cube. In that movie people were incarcerated in a square rooms. Of course, the people used various methods to

move and find the exit but they couldn't solve the mystery.

'They were square rooms with 4 exits. Yes, the structure of the pyramid is almost the same as the movie. The arrangements of the rooms will continuously change. That explains why I didn't find the exit just by moving in one direction. If this trap is the same as that movie then I won't be able to find the exit by just wandering around. Then the exit must be hidden somewhere.'

The problem was finding it. And the place the answer was hidden.....

'Identical rooms! It is this room!'

There was nothing in this room except for the Anubis statues. Therefore the clue must be something depicted on the mural! Ark came to that conclusion and meticulously cleaned the walls with the dust cloth while examining the murals carefully. Then Ark found something suspicious for the first time. He had gone through hundreds of room without noticing but huge letters were carved on the bottom of the mural. They were characters like those in ancient Egypt! Naturally Ark couldn't read it.....

The Murat were an ancient civilization from the Bellin constellation. The Murat were a species shrouded in a veil of mystery. Only some of the characters could be decoded at the moment.

"The ruins of the Murat....."

He had heard about the alien species called the Murat before. It had appeared in the information window about Beltana when he had been assigned there. Originally Beltana was one of the colonies of the ancient species. Therefore Ark guessed that the ruins underneath Beltana were related to the Murat.

'Then is the Murat the cause of Egyptian civilization?'

A great historical secret was revealed. But Ark didn't care about that.

*I am Anubis.....the gatekeeper of the underworld. Well.....the providence of the universe.....the reason.....The person who doesn't follow the natural rules.....forever.....you won't escape.*

Those were the Murat letter that the Nymphe was able to decode. Some parts were missing so he couldn't check the entire contents.

'But I managed to decipher some words. Anubis was the gatekeeper to the underworld. The natural laws....if I don't follow the natural laws then I can't escape from this place.....in the end, I have to move in a certain order to escape this place? In order.....but all the rooms are similar so how can I tell what the order is?'

Bbok! Bbok! Bbok! Bbok!

Ark came up with an idea in time with the noise of the octopus on his head. And yesterday Ark was finally able to find the answer. One day had passed since he determined the answer.

'Now I have to look properly.....'

"Facilities Maintenance!"

Ark lifted the dust cloth and shouted. Facilities Maintenance increased his cleaning by 30%! Ark fiercely used his dust cloth and the room became free of dust.

"There's no doubt. Here! I've come to the right place!"

Ark's eyes caught the mural near the upper corner of one exit. So far, all the murals in the rooms that Ark passed were similar. No, he thought they were similar. However, if he carefully looked at the murals then there were different parts. Doors opened in all 4 directions after he took care of the Anubis. There was a person sitting on a throne painted on the upper corner. If he just glanced at it then there wasn't anything different but the age of the painted man was different. Some murals was a young child, others a young man, etc.....

'Anubis is the gatekeeper of the underworld!'

Ark combined all the clues in his head.

'The gatekeeper of the underworld has to follow the natural laws. There is a process from the moment of birth to death. That's what the murals on the wall is about. People go through a natural process

from the moment they were born to the moment they die. It is a natural order. Then that is the order to reach the exit!’

Ark considered and looked for the room where the mural was in its youngest state. He chose the exit where the baby changed to a child and moved to the next room before selecting the exit with the next stage. And he had finally reached the mural where an old man was on his deathbed!

“.....This is the last one!”

Ark’s face was filled with expectation.

“Indeed!”

Ark clenched his fists. He went through the door with the mural of the dying man. The passage was different from the hundreds he had passed through previously. The left and right side of the passage were lined with a huge number of glass tubes. The glass tubes were filled with a clear liquid and contained various newborn animals, plant specimens or even strange creatures floating around. However, nothing was alive. All the creatures in the glass tubes were completely rotted.

“This atmosphere.....”

The glass tubes contained tens of thousands of decayed bodies! He felt a chill as he walked along the narrow passage.

“Are the Murat an alien species who conducted biological experiments?”

It was an uncomfortable thought. But the Murat were already extinct. Ark clamped down his uncomfortable feeling and moved forward. After 20 minutes and tens of thousands of glass tubes, he finally appeared in front of doors painted with ancient Egyptian gods. He was about to open it but he didn’t need to worry.

Dudududu! Dudududu!

The door automatically opened once he approached. And it appeared.....

“The gold room!”

It was the gold room he had discovered after digging. It had been 10 days since Ark arrived here. The paving stone that Ark had pushed up was still in the middle while the mummy was sitting on the throne on the opposite side. And the sword and pyramid lying on the table were also the same.

“That’s it! I made it!”

Any thoughts about escaping the pyramid was forgotten. There was a reason Ark had entered in the first place. The typical owners of pyramids were pharaohs so the burial goods might be left with them. He had wandered around for 10 days but he had finally returned to the gold room. Ark looked at the items on the table and was about to approach when he flinched and stopped.

‘Wait? Didn’t I previously fall into the trap because I walked carelessly? I opened the door and formally entered but there is no guarantee the trap won’t trigger again.’

There was a chance he might return to the room filled with Anubis statues. Well, he knew the escape route but it would still be troublesome.

‘But the trap won’t excessively activate. There must be a way to avoid it.....’

A smile formed on Ark’s mouth. The gold room had paving stones approximately 1 metres laid out.

And images of a pharaoh sitting on the throne were also drawn on the paving stones. The images of a baby to an old man were all jumbled up. Then wasn’t the answer simple?

“First, this guy.....”

Ark laughed and stepped on the image of a baby. Then a young child, a young man, a man.....Ark carefully stepped on the paving stones and managed to arrive in front of the mummy. And he could finally obtain the Pharaoh’s artefacts!

-Impact Blade (Unique)
------------------------

Item Type: Matter Blade (Two-handed)	Wearer Restriction:
Level 40	
Attack: 45~55	Durability: 80/80
Number of Ammunition: 4(Attack: 20~25)	
A Gun blade found in the ruins belonging to an ancient alien species called the Murat.	
The Murat was a powerful species that controlled the Bellin constellation in the centre of the galaxy. They use ancient magic through the mysterious energy called mana. Once science started to develop, the Murat combined the ancient magic and science to form a new civilization. The current technology of the federation and Rama are based on artefacts recovered from Murat ruins. The Impact Blade is one such technology that combines science and ancient magic. It is a combination of a matter blade and pistol. Portability is valued so there are few ammunition but it is possible to use a gun and sword together.	
<Strength +20, Stamina +15>	
Special Feature (Impact Shot): When Impact Shot is used after a sword attack, there is a 30% chance of triggering addition 50% damage.	

“U-unique sword!”

Ark’s mouth dropped open. He had finally obtained the Pharaoh’s artefacts after 10 days so he had high expectations. And he was level 43 so finding a magic item would be a jackpot he had thought. Yet it was an unique item! Of course, a unique item wasn’t always good. Magic or rare items depended on the stats but unique items were based on its distinctiveness. In other words, items that weren’t common had that rating. Because the unique item had strange functions, sometimes the practical usage was less than a magic or rare item. However, the scarcity of the item meant it could be traded for a more expensive price than rare items.

“But this unique item is different!”



The performance of a unique item couldn't be guaranteed unless tried out. However, the level was the same but it had 10 more damage than his magic item. Besides, it was a sword and gun so it had close range and long range functions! And that was the best thing!

“Woo! I didn't suffer in vain for 10 days!”

All the accumulated stress of the last 10 days was released. But that wasn't the only item. There was a small pyramid next to the sword.

“It doesn't seem to be an equipment based on the shape.....”

Ark had already received a jackpot so he leisurely picked up the pyramid. The pyramid vibrated and dozens of rays of light shot up from it. A 3D image was then drawn like a panorama in the sky.

‘Fire.....!’

The first scene that developed was filled with flames. Countless numbers of buildings and a castle in a city that looked like ancient Egypt was engulfed in flames. Apart from the people running away from the flames in the city, some people were also running in a hallway filled with glass tubes. And the ones using a gun and sword to slay them were.....

‘The Rama Clan?’

They had dark skin, pointed ears and blue eyes! The ones wielding the weapons and killing people were the Rama.

‘Wait? Didn't the information window say the reason why the Murat became extinct were unknown? The people on the screen were probably the Murat clan. Does that mean the Murat were destroyed by the Rama? Why is such a fact unknown?’

But the images didn't offer any explanations. The Rama's brutal killing proceeded for a while. Then the screen changed and a place that looked like a palace appeared. The Pharaoh looked at the flaming city with hopeless eyes. And he finally gave an order to the Murat in the palace. The Murat received the order and entered the

hallway filled with glass tubes. All the Murat entered glass tubes and the Pharaoh operated something in the palace. A giant pyramid formed around the palace, the Pharaoh and the glass tubes and was swept deep underground. A large explosion occurred shortly after that. The explosion was enough to burn the surface of the planet! All the Murat and Rama running around were turned into dust. The planet lost its light and cooled really quickly.

‘This is why Beltana is a frozen planet.....’

The Pharaoh used an ancient weapon after being cornered. But the video hadn’t ended yet. The Pharaoh wrapped him and his people in an pyramid and sent them underground to protect them. Then he left a distress signal for any kin scattered around the Bellin constellation. And he waited. 1 year, 2 years, 3 years.....he waited for his fellow kin for a long time. However nobody came. After dozens of years, the people in the glass tubes started to rot. The Pharaoh despaired. And he foresaw the end of the Murat. The Pharaoh took out the pyramid that Ark was holding. He opened the bottom and placed his hand inside. A glowing liquid flowed from his fingertips and filled the empty space. The Pharaoh placed his sword and the pyramid on the table. He sat on his throne and his life ended.

Ark now understood the situation.

‘Yes, the life forms in the glass tubes were the Murat who sought refuge before Beltana perished. The Pharaoh annihilated the Rama and thought his kin from other planets would come to rescue them. However, their kin didn’t come and the life forms started rotting. The Pharaoh died in this state. The distress signal I received was the one the Pharaoh sent to his kin.’

However, the Pharaoh died and hundreds of years passed while the signal weakened. Ark was able to receive the signal because he found the underground square. Then the video footage ended.

-You have acquired undisclosed information about the ancient alien species called the Murat.

The universe has a long history and many alien civilizations have grown and declined. Finding undisclosed information can help

illuminate the history of the universe. Hidden alien artefacts or technology can play a decisive role.

+ Information about the ancient alien species Murat (1/15).

+ You have obtained 300 Adventure points for acquiring information about the Murat.

+ You have gained 5 Intelligence for acquiring information about the Murat.

-The Nympe has acquired a map of the Bellin constellation.

<The Bellin constellation map has been added to the map information window>

“Hoh, I also received a bonus like this?”

Ark laughed after reading the information window. It was an ancient alien civilization. This was an important part of Galaxian. It was unexpected but Ark was in the centre of an adventure! Istana might be the centre of the federation but there are numerous planets and new directions that could open up in Galaxian. And the heart of these adventures was finding ancient alien civilizations. Excavating ruins of an ancient alien civilization could be directly connected to the growth of a user. Pioneers with sponsors would also get the largest compensation for such information. It was similar to the Adventure points. Of course, Ark was still a prisoner so that was in the far future.....

“The things I’ve obtained aren’t bad.”

And he also received a bonus 5 intelligence. It is a useful bonus that can be used immediately.

“By the way.....”

Ark’s eyes looked at the bottom of the pyramid. He remembered the glowing liquid that the Pharaoh emitted before he died. He tinkered with the bottom a few times before it opened. Hundreds of years had passed but the liquid was still shining.

“What is this?”

Ark touched the liquid without thinking. The liquid suddenly bubbled and enveloped Ark’s hand.

“Huk! What, what the? I-Is this another trap?”

Ark screamed and quickly removed his hand. However, the glowing liquid was just absorbed even more and the information window appeared.

-You have absorbed the photon life form ‘Shire!’

The Shire are mysterious photon life forms and are some of the most mysterious creatures in the universe. According to old documents, they will condense over millions of years to form mana. The Murat have the ability to use the power of the Shire through ‘Rune’ characters.

+ You have absorbed the Shire and acquired a Rune.

+ You have acquired a Rune (Ikram) from the Murat memory contained.

-A new skill (Common Occupation ☆☆☆☆☆) has been learnt.

Rune Carving (User, Active): When the photon Shire is summoned and a rune carved then a skill will be manifested. Although the Murat civilization is now gone, the Runes once had a profound contribute on their ability to take control of the Bellin constellation.

<It is possible to carve runes in the Shire>

Mana consumption: 10(+Mana cost of the Rune)

“Eh? A 5 star rated skill?”

He was stunned by the information window. He never imagined he would get a skill like this. Moreover, wasn’t a 5 star skill the best skill rating? A 5 star rated skill was a jackpot.

“5 stars! It must be a tremendous skill!”

Ark tried out the skill with anticipation.

‘I just have to draw a rune in the Shire? Wait? Is this odd pattern the Ikram Rune? I should try it out.’

Ark read the information window and shouted.

“Come out, Shire! Rune Carving!”

A light appeared from Ark’s hand. It was the photon life form Shire! And Ark carved a rune in that light. Ark carved the complicated pattern in the air.....

Pisisisi.

And the light scattered again?

“Eh? What is this? Did I make a mistake?”

But it was also the same afterwards. The rune drawn looked exactly the same as the one on the Nymphé. He even tried to change the order he drew the rune in but the light still scattered.

“Pant pant pant, damn! What is this? Is this skill really right?”

Ark muttered with a lost expression. He had obtained a wonderful skill but it wouldn’t trigger. It was enough to make him want to run and curse. However, he had already wandered the pyramid for 10 days so he couldn’t waste more time here struggling with the skill.

“Ah, I don’t know. I can explore the skill once I return to the federation base.”

One thing that was on his mind was the Royal Guards.

“Don’t tell me those guys are starving without me?”

That was the thing Ark was anxious about. It also wasn’t necessary to search the pyramid for a way out. When he entered the Pharaoh’s room from the door then a magic circle was drawn underneath the throne. He had been playing the game for a few years. Wasn’t the answer obvious? It was clearly a warp point that appeared after clearing dungeons! He entered the magic circle and the gold room spun around him. The light disappeared and he appeared in the

middle of a snowstorm. He had been teleported several kilometres upwards.

“Huhuhu, now I can return to the base.

Ark smirked and manipulated the Nymph. Then he screamed.

“T-this is ridiculous!”

# To the Base.....!

---

“Ah.....!”

Countless soft powders poured from the sky. The sky was black like a cosy bedroom while the wind sounded like a lullaby. If he closed his eyes then it seemed possible to be submerged in a happy dream. Such thoughts crept into his head after closing his eyes. But Ark didn't worry about that.

‘My food.....’

He opened his bag and saw piles of cupcakes and cookies. Ark took out a cupcake with whipped cream and raised it to his mouth. And as he took a bite.....pakak!

“Ugh!”

Ark screamed and jumped up. He grabbed his tingling mouth and looked around with a confused expression. His happy illusion broke at that moment. And he was returned to the gloomy reality. His hand was holding a Zaliman ore instead of a cupcake. The soft powder and cosy bedroom.....

Hwiiiiii-!

The snow storm swirling on Beltana! He started trembling as soon as he noticed the chill.

“D-dammit! My destiny, why is my destiny also twisted like this?”

Ark painfully raised his body from the ice. Endorphins flowed through his head as he recalled his memories. He had wandered the pyramid for 10 days and had obtained a unique sword, information about an ancient alien civilizations and a 5 star skill. It was amazing! He had only suffered since starting Galaxian so it was good to receive some compensation. That feeling disappeared the moment he appeared outside and operated his Nymphe's GPS.

---

||-Distance to the galactic federation's base: 532 km||

His mood plummeted at the message that appeared on the GPS. Ark was released at a location 532 km from the base.

"I-I have to walk 532 km?"

Ark looked at the swirling snow storm with blank eyes. Beltana was a planet with a temperature of -50 degrees Celsius. Of course, Ark was able to survive the current temperature due to the Prisoner body coating. That's how he managed to dig Iridium for hours as well as fighting on the battlefields.

'532 km means that it will take more than 10 days if I walk 50 km in one day.'

He had to walk for 10 days in the freezing cold. Even if he received the body coating, his body wouldn't be fine in such low temperatures for 10 days. His body temperature would start falling. His body became as stiff as stone and he experienced dizziness many times. Finally the cold was more than his body coating could handle.

||-Your body temperature has fallen below the limit and all abilities will decrease by 20%.||

That message appeared after one day passed. But there was an even bigger problem. The body coating allowed him to adapt to the harsh environment so he could restore his body temperature.....and that was exactly the problem.

'I only have 5 foods left.'

Ark sighed as he searched through his bag. He was responsible for the food supply of the Royal Guards so Ark always had food packed in his bag. The amount was enough for one or two months. If he had that much food then he didn't have to worry about walking 1,000 km. But Ark only had 5 Space Foods remaining in his bag. The rest of the food.....

||-<Zaliman Ore>, <Zaliman Ore>, <Zaliman Ore>.....||



It had all changed to the Zaliman ore. So many Zaliman ores had dropped that he threw away food to pack it in his bag.

‘The crevasse that I fell in was only 50 km away from the B-3 base. So I thought 5 Space Foods would be enough but I appeared 532 km from the base.....’

It was impossible to reach the base with 5 Space Foods. Especially once the storm started and the temperatures fell even more.

*-You will be punished if you don't think food is important.*

His mother had said that. As expected, the words of an adult wasn't wrong. He was being punished for dumping the food for ores. However, Ark didn't give up. No, he couldn't give up. He had gained 12 levels after spending 10 days in the pyramid. He couldn't just give up the 12 levels he earned!

“There's only one way! I have to return to the base before my food runs out!”

Ark marched through the storm. Fortunately he managed to march 70 km after 12 hours.....

“I fell asleep in the unit!”

Ark was so tired he fell asleep while walking. His connection also wasn't ended. While Ark was lost in dreams, his character was left in the -50 degrees weather as his body temperature and satiety fell. While he was wandering in the dream, he took out an ore and bit it.

“Dammit, my satiety has fallen to 20%.”

Ark took out a piece of food and recovered his satiety. Now he only had 4 Space Foods left. The situation was becoming even more hopeless.

“There's no time to be doing this! I have to move in order to live! Armour armament!”

Ark immediately pulled out the battle suit. The thick battle suit meant his body temperature didn't fall. The armour bolstered his physical ability including his movement speed. That's how Ark was able to

move 70 km in 12 hours!

“Run! Hyper Drone!”

The battle suit clad Ark ran through the snow storm. After 30 minutes, the mana was consumed and the battle suit disappeared. But that didn't stop Ark. If he stopped then his probability of survival would decrease. He moved painfully through the snow storm while starving. Ark flinched and stopped moving.

‘.....What?’

At first he thought it was a trick. But when he narrowed his eyes and concentrated, he realized it wasn't a trick.

‘Light? There's no doubt about it. That's a light!’

Why was there a visible light on the other hill? It wasn't a natural light. Artificial light! In other words, it meant someone was there.

‘Yes, my Nymphe only registers some defense bases around the federation's main base. I don't believe that is a base. Maybe that light belongs to a federation scouting unit! Then I can get some supplies!’

Ark concentrated all his willpower and ran up the hill. And he looked at the bottom with expectant eyes.

“Heok! T-this is.....?”

Ark's face stiffened.

---

“What are you doing Ark?”

The blonde youth bit his lips until it became bloody. He was the young man who followed Ark to Nephalim. However, when he searched through the guidance system he discovered that Ark had been compulsorily sent to Beltana as punishment for a crime. But he didn't worry about it.

‘He is Ark.’

The youth knew that Ark was more persevering than a

cockroach. Ark wasn't the type of user to break down because of a problem. He always returned with a presumptuous look.

'I don't really understand. I'm a novice who just left R-14. But Ark arrived at the frontier before me. Obviously there is a significant level difference between us. I don't want to meet Ark like this. However, Ark had received a penalty so it will be difficult to raise his level. This is an opportunity for me to catch up with Ark!'

So he eagerly hunted. He had learnt Swamp Walking from the Charenjok so he went to the southern swamps and hunted the mechanical creatures called Nakuma. His level quickly grew and he received a body coating. The time taken was a fortnight. However.....

'Not yet!'

It had been 20 days since Ark went to Beltana but he hadn't returned yet.

'There is something strange. Ark wouldn't be lost for 20 days.....'

The blonde youth couldn't wait anymore. So he made a resolution.

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

*-A gunfight has occurred in Nephalim!*

*-Two guards and three battle androids have been injured! The suspect has been arrested at the scene of the crime!*

*The android association of the Space Union demanded strong punishment! The government investigated and determined it had something to do with the group against machines called 'Tree of Life.'*

It was a murder case that raised a fuss in Nephalim. A blonde man was arrested at the scene by the guards. However, the young man who was handcuffed was wearing a smile.

'Just wait Ark. Here I come!'

---

Sasasasak! Sasasasak!

Something moved in the darkness. It was a shadow that stuck close to the ground and moved like a cockroach! The shadow moved forward between sparsely separated rocks. Finally the shadow approached a place where thick beams of light lit up a fence. The shadow raised its head and quickly peeked over the fence.

‘Phew, it really is creepy.’

There were an absurd number of monsters swarming on the other side of the fence. With bent arms and long hair, they were the Carack. Thousands of the Rama’s biological weapons were swarming around the fence. And the person peeking at them was Ark.

‘I can’t believe I found a Rama base in a place like this!’

Ark recalled his memories.

“Heok! T-this is.....?”

He discovered a light and ran up a hill. Ark had witnessed a massive military base from the hill. However, it wasn’t the base of the federation like Ark expected. The soldiers wandering the barracks had dark skin and pointed ears, the alien species Rama! He had wandered around the ice field and unexpectedly found a Rama base.

‘Oh my god! This is a Rama camp? Judging by the size, it isn’t just a simple defense base. Perhaps it is the main base. The main base of the Rama clan!’

Ark’s heart started pounding.

‘This might be a huge opportunity.’

Once again, the most important thing about the war on Beltana was finding the rival’s main base.

Reinforcements and supplies were sent through the Star Gate then destroying the Fairy and the Star Gate could end the war. However, advanced equipment like satellites or radar were useless because the Rama and the federation had similar scientific knowledge. The magnetic field around Beltana was also several times higher so airships couldn’t be used. Therefore they had to use scouting troops

to look for the enemy bases. Yet Ark had discovered the headquarters of the Rama.

‘What if I told the federation the location of this base?’

Discovering the headquarters of the enemy was crucial to winning the war. It would clearly give huge achievement points.

‘But.....’

That would only apply if he returned alive. The user’s route was automatically recorded on the Nymph’s GPS. But it wasn’t complete. It had to be registered with the Fairy for the record to be permanent. In other words, all the information about the surrounding area would disappear if it wasn’t registered with the Fairy.

‘If I die before returning to the base then this location won’t be saved on the GPS!’

He had one more reason to return alive. At the same time, the probability of returning alive had decreased.

‘Dammit, there is only a 10% probability that I can return to the base.....I have to get past this base to reach the federation base. If I move then I will be spotted by the Rama. At least there are no scouts. But beyond that base is the battlefield between the Rama and the federation. There is a high chance there will be a lot of scouts.’

Of course, there was a chance Ark could avoid the scouting troops. However, Ark had to move in a straight line to guarantee his survival. There was no time for him to avoid them.

‘It can’t be helped. Thankfully the view is limited due to the snow storm.’

Ark came to that conclusion and tried to sneak past the Rama base. Suddenly an unexpected object caught Ark’s eye.

‘Wait? That.....!’

The object was reflected in Ark’s eye! At that moment, Ark’s head started spinning fiercely.

‘There’s no doubt about it. If I get my hands on that then my probability of survival will increase!’

But there was a problem. The object Ark wanted was deep inside the Rama’s camp. It was impossible to reach ‘that’ without the guards noticing.

‘I have to somehow get my hands on it. Is there a way to attract the attention of the Rama for a short moment.

Then the kennels of the Carack caught Ark’s eyes.

‘Let’s give it a shot!’

Ark made various plans as his eyes shone. Of course, approaching the Carack’s kennels wasn’t easy. The Carack were the enemy. Naturally approaching the tent of an enemy was dangerous! But Ark had an invaluable skill.....

-Withdrawal has been used.
----------------------------

<Probability of being detected by an enemy: 15%>
--

It was the Withdrawal skill that he learnt from a pardoned prisoner. It was a skill where hiding among the topography decreased the chances of being detected by an enemy.

‘The probability never exceeded 10% when I was hiding among the rocks. But a 15% chance is nothing to worry about.’

Ark checked the kennels while flat on the ground. Thousands of Carack were inside the barracks.

He only found out now but the Carack was a herbivore. Hay was strewn on the ground in order to feed the Carack. Some of the Carack were eating the hay now. It was unexpected but fortunate for Ark.

‘Now, let’s get started!’

Ark crawled like a cockroach along the ground and followed the fence. And he finally managed to approach the kennels. Ark built up a bunch of hay and finally pulled the trigger of Fading Steel. There

was no sound because the hay acted like a silencer.

Tung-! Tung-! Tung-!

There was a dull ringing sound. Flames started among the hay. The bullet loaded in the Fading Steel was the Fire Bullet! The hay instantly caught fire. Once the dry hay caught fire, it instantly spread to the rest of the food.

‘That’s it! It was successful!’

This was what Ark had aimed for. Using the Fire Bullets to light the Carack’s food on fire! The trapped Carack instantly panicked as the hay caught on fire. The Carack were important troops to the Rama so it was natural for the chaos to spread! It wasn’t surprising for turmoil to spread through the base.

Kararara? Kararara!

*-What is going on? Fire! The Carack’s kennel has caught on fire!*

*-Dammit, why? Ring the alarm before the flames spread even more!*

‘But there is still something lacking.’

Ark laughed after escaping from the flames.

Tang-! Tang-! Tang-! Tang-!

Subsequent shots were heard around other kennels.

*–S-shots! The enemy! The enemy troops are attacking the Carack’s kennels!*

*–Ack! I-is it the federation? Everybody gather! Shoot all of them!*

*–Captain-nim, the infrared scopes hasn’t detected them!*

*-It doesn’t matter! Those guys are hiding near the kennels! Just shoot!*

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

The Rama warriors ran to the kennels and started firing their machine guns blindly.....It was useless.

‘Heh! I didn’t think I would fool them so well.’

Ark laughed as he saw the flashes of light in the darkness. This was the reason Ark set fire to the hay. Ark had ran around the kennels and placed a handful of Fire Bullets. Once the fire spread through the hay and reached the Fire Bullets.....Tang! Tang! Tang! The bullets exploded in every direction. The Rama thought it was a surprise attack by enemy troops.....

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tang! Tang! Tang! Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu!

There was an intense gunfight between the flying bullets and the Rama warriors. A gunfight occurred. His mind wanted to watch the ending to the fascinating battle but.....

‘There’s no time! I must escape before they notice!’

Ark ran like a cockroach through the base. It wasn’t necessary to explain but he hadn’t done this for fun. He had discovered it from above the hill! The attention of the Rama guards were now focused on the side of the kennel.

‘It’s a success! There’s no one here!’

Ark looked at the object.....

‘Bike! It is a federation bike!’

Ark had discovered it when looking from the hilltop. Like he said before, there were many collisions between the scouting units on Beltana. However, the overall length of the battlefields in Galaxian wasn’t only several kilometres. Sometimes there were dozens of hundreds of kilometres between the base and the strategy area. When moving to a strategy area, the federation used the Memeod tank for transportation. However, that wasn’t the only way to move troops. There were also motorbikes for personal transport of individuals in scouting units. It was different from movement in the medieval ages. Ark had discovered the federation’s bike that the Rama warriors had probably taken as loot after killing the scouting



unit. The reason he hid in the base and lit the hay on fire was to obtain the bike.

‘The OS is different so a user affiliated with the federation can’t use a Rama bike.’

However, this was a bike from the federation. Of course, the federation didn’t allow just anyone to ride the bike. A key was needed to start the bikes in Galaxian. However, a key wasn’t the only way to start the bike. The Nymphé was a multipurpose device where all the user’s information was registered! A registered owner could just connect their Nymphes to move the bike.....

-This memory chip is protected with a security device.

Enter the security code or use Invaders to hack and release the lock.

Attempt to hack? Y/N

‘Indeed!’

The message flashed as soon as his Nymphé connected to the bike. Ark had learnt the hacking skill from Tori.

‘The remaining problem is if I can finish hacking before the Rama notice.....’

-The current lock accessed is ‘Galloway: Level 3.’

The airship located on the bottom is your hacking program ‘Invader.’

You have to move Invader and wipe out numerous hostile programs to protect the lock. If Invader is destroyed then the hacking attempt will fail and you will have to start again.

Now, display your newly learned hacking capabilities and try to destroy the protection program!

‘How lucky.’

A smile formed around Ark’s mouth. It was the small airship game

Galloway! This was one of the classic games that Ark was the best at.

'I don't have a lot of time. I don't know what will happen if I don't release the lock on time!'

Ark focused all his concentration on hacking.

Byong! Byong! Byong! Byong!

He was playing Galloway in the middle of a hostile area! Anyway.....he felt tension but this was Ark's life. No, he was more concerned with the game. If he managed to seize the bike then he could return to the base alive! If discovered by the Rama then he would be a beggar! It was a risk that would either be a jackpot or turn him into a beggar!

Byong! Byong! Byong! Byong!

So Ark was busy while the shooting was continuing.

*-Hey, you!*

The voice of a Rama was heard from behind him.

*–What are you doing by yourself? Haven't you noticed the uproar on the base?*

When he flinched and turned, he saw 2 Rama warriors approaching him. Ark was surprised but he sharpened his mind.

'I can't let them know I'm from the federation!'

Ark had worn the battle suit before entering the base. Ark's battle suit belonged to the Rama so it would decrease the likelihood of being caught. Even if Ark was spotted, the Rama wouldn't know he was an enemy straight away. But if they used the infrared scope then his identity would be discovered. If he also replied in a different language then he would be discovered.

'I have to release his lock before that!'

Byong! Byong! Byong! Byong!

Ark focused on the Galloway game on his Nymphe again.

*-What? This bastard, why aren't you saying anything? Do you want to be shot?*

*-Besides, why are you wearing a battle suit in a place like this?*

*-Eh? What? This jerk, why are you playing a game by yourself?*

*-Ha, it really is outrageous. Hey, you! Who are you?*

The Rama warrior grabbed Ark's shoulder.

<p><i>-You have finally surpassed all the firewalls and the lock on the bike has been released!</i></p>
---

'That's it! The bike's lock is released!'

The enormous ship that was the boss exploded and the message appeared. Ark took out his Fading Steel and smiled pleasantly.

"Set Bullets Shooting!"

Cheolkeok, cheolkeok, cheolkeok! Pepepeng!

Set Bullets Shooting shot out three bullets in one blow! The Rama warrior was hit by the bullets and stumbled back. Meanwhile, Ark quickly got on the bike and turned the handles. There was the sound of an engine and the bike flew forward at a tremendous speed. Yes, he flew away! The bikes in Galaxian weren't normal and were actually a hover bike! It was a futuristic flying bike with a comfortable riding position and a maximum speed of 300 km/hr.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The bike instantly left the Rama base.

*-Kuak! That guy!*

*-That bastard, he isn't a Rama! Sound the alarm.....!*

*-There's no time! Besides, the base is already being attacked so the perimeter alert is useless. There is no time to let the other*

*soldiers know so we have to chase him ourselves!*

The two Rama warriors grabbed their bikes and pursued him. Three bikes rushed through the raging snow storm. Ark departed first but the Rama warriors still caught up. Ark was new to the bike while the Rama warriors were experienced.

“Damn! I have to lose them somehow.....heok!”

Ark cried out as he saw the Rama warriors that caught up with him. One of them was carrying a RPG on his shoulder and aiming at Ark.

“H-heavy weapon!”

*–Lock on! Now take this!*

Tutung! Syuuuuuuuu!

Smoke blew out as a small warhead was fired.

‘If that hits me directly then I’m dead!’

Ark screamed and turned the handle sharply. There was a strange sound as the bike turned perpendicularly. The Rama’s artillery had a tracking function so the trajectory stayed with the bike. And the moment it was about to hit! Ark quickly turned the handle in the opposite direction. The homing feature couldn’t follow such sharp movements.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The shell that missed its target hit something else and exploded. However, he didn’t have time to sigh with relief as the other Rama warrior fired.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Pepepeng!

There was an explosion to the rear of the bike as it turned and a red warning message appeared.

-The engine has been hit and the output is rapidly decreasing.  
If the engine is hit again, there is a risk that it will explode.

This was why it was difficult to use a bike on the battlefield. The

benefits was that it was quick and easy to handle but the fatal weakness is its weak defense!

‘Dammit, it is impossible to lose them like this! If so.....’

He grabbed the bike’s handle firmly and looked at them with the infrared scope. The chasing Rama warriors were level 41 and 42. And Ark was now level 43 thanks to the pyramid!

‘It is worth a try!’

There was no gap to hesitate. Ark rotated the bike 180 degrees and pulled the accelerator. The bike made a roaring sound like a scream and rushed towards the bikes of the chasing Rama warriors.

*–That guy! Is he trying to die with us?*

*–Smash the bike!*

The two Rama warriors lifted their guns to stop the bike.

Tu tu tu tu! Tu tu tu tu! Tung! Tung! Tung! Tung!

The warriors relentlessly attacked with their machine guns. Sparks flew from Ark’s bike and smoke started to spread. And when it was a few metres away from the warriors’ bikes!

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

It exploded and smoke and fire spread in the sky.

*-It’s over.*

*–Sheesh, I wanted to capture him if possible.....*

*-We still don’t know. That guy might be breathing still.*

*–We should check it.....*

The two Rama warriors got off their bike and took out their hammers. And they approached the vortex of smoke and fire.

“Come out, Shire!”

They suddenly heard shouting in the midst of the smoke.

Hwakak!

At the same time, the swirling smoke was split in half. A hand surrounded by blue light moved through the air and drew a complicated pattern. It was the Rune Carving skill that he learn from the ancient Murat alien civilization

“Rune Carving! Ikram rune invoked!”

The pattern of light was completed.

# Credits

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